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BEAUTIES
OF
SACRED LITERATURE.

Thomas McMillan

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JOHN A. GRAY & GREEN,

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BEAUTIES
OF
Sacred Literature.

A COMPENDIUM
OF
CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE, FAITH, AND PRACTICE.

Selected from Various Authors,

EDITED BY A LAY MEMBER OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

Original by Alexander J.
"Christianity has fallen into contempt, through pure ignorance of its nature and design. And until this obstacle is removed, the clearest display of its external evidences, or even its moral excellences, as exemplified in our Saviour's life, and taught in his precepts, will be of little or no avail."—ALEXANDER KNOX.



NEW YORK:
PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF
EVANGELICAL KNOWLEDGE,
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K.P.



“ WE must bring into view the very kernel of Christianity, freed from all its husky integuments ; and when this is rightly done, it will be seen that genuine Christianity is that centre where intellect, judgment, taste, interest, prudence, principle, the firmness of the Stoic, the devotion of the Platonist, the tranquillity of the Epicurean, the archetypal realities to which all earthly objects, in the shape of pleasure, profit, or honor, correspond, as gilded clouds do to the sun,—all meet, and is, of course, that identical chief good which human nature, so soon as its higher faculties have at any time come into action, has invariably panted after, and which the wisest sages have so agreed in describing, that even by their marks alone we might be satisfied of its genuine existence in the Gospel.”—ALEXANDER KNOX.



PREFACE.

THE selections contained in this volume have been made from the most eminent writers of the Christian Church, at various periods of her history, and embrace the essential and practical truths of Christianity.

From such a compilation, the introduction of puzzling theories, of abstruse speculations, of logical subtilties and of gloomy dogmas, is of course excluded.

Man's science is the culture of the heart,
And not to lose his plummet in the depths
Of nature, or the more profound of God."

Although in the present day (so prolific of writers in every department) we cannot complain of any lack of religious publications, often of acknowledged merit, it must at the same time be admitted that while some of them are faulty in taste, others give erroneous and distorted views of the Gospel system. From these defects the writings which constitute this work will be found

entirely free ; the views it presents are orthodox and evangelical, and such as exhibit in the most simple, lucid, and comprehensive form, the sacred science of Christianity.

The numerous topics introduced, together with the varied opinions expressed by several writers, will furnish not only interesting matter for investigation, but afford an opportunity for discovering how in the light thrown upon them by the purest and brightest minds, the different parts of Divine Truth become homogeneous ; how under the touch of sanctified genius, the seeming discrepancies that pervade Gospel truth are fused into happy harmony.

The original matter is strictly adhered to, it being deemed preferable not to alter or modify the phraseology. In a few instances quaintness of style will be found, but not such as to obscure the sense and spirit of the meaning. In fine, it may be affirmed that these selections are written in a diction of unrivalled purity, strength and beauty ; and by those who have hearts to feel and minds to understand, it will doubtless be admitted that the piety and genius by which they are animated and illumined class them among the most unsophisticated effluences of the Christian head and heart to be found in any language.

C O N T E N T S.

“ THE scheme of the Gospel must be considered altogether, in order to the correct understanding of any one feature.

The whole outward scheme of things appears to be that to Christianity which the body is to the soul or spirit of the individual. To each person it is, when given to him from on high, as a soul within his soul ; overcoming the carnal life, and producing a divine and spiritual principle, which is not only life but peace. And, in a grander way, it is working inwardly and invisibly in the great social mass of mankind, until, by this mighty but unobserved working, the whole shall be leavened. To be within such a Divine scheme, and to make an humble part of it, is the chief end, the consummate glory, the only real life of man.”—ALEXANDER KNOX.

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“THE men who spend their time in an impartial search after truth, are better friends to mankind than the greatest statesmen or heroes; the advantage of whose labors are confined to a little part of the world, and a short space of time: whereas a ray of truth may enlighten the whole world, and live to after ages.”—BERKELEY.

PART I

“ HE who is in earnest in his endeavors after the happiness of a future state, has an advantage over all the world : for he has constantly before his eyes an object of supreme importance, productive of perpetual engagement and activity, and of which the pursuit (which can be said of no pursuit besides) lasts him to his life’s end.”—PALEY.

“ Christianity, to be the light of the world, must be naturally, as well as supernaturally, engaging ; it must be cheerful as ‘t is luminous ; not only pure but sublime ; beautiful itself, and adding fresh beauty to all which it irradiates.”—ALEXANDER KNOX.

BEAUTIES
OF
SACRED LITERATURE.

*Christianity the Way of Peace and True
Happiness.*

DAVID, in that noble nineteenth Psalm, makes an important distinction between secret faults and presumptuous sins ; and while he laments the former (“ Who can tell how oft he offendeth ? ”), and prays (therefore looks) for deliverance from them, he actually implies a freedom, though not a security, from the latter. This appears from the different terms, “ cleanse from ” and “ keep from ; ” the former implying present in-being ; the latter, clear separation and some present distance, though with possibility of their returning and reëntering. Now, this may be taken as a brief, but clear, statement of what is essential, at the lowest, to a state of grace : a freedom from all presumptuous sins. The will is averted from moral evil ; all the deliberate volitions are pure and holy ; wrong

desires and passions are felt as diseases, to be habitually guarded against, and, as far as possible, to be wholly suppressed. All those acts, therefore, which imply predominant depravity, are at an end. But, in matters which belong to weakness rather than depravity, to the excitability of the passions, without any perverseness of will, the language may still be that of David, "Who can tell how oft he offendeth?"—"Oh, cleanse thou me from my secret faults!" yea, and will be still, to a certain extent; he who has conquered one set of faults, finding forthwith, by means of his increased moral sensibility, a new set of still more subtle faults, to be guarded against and resisted.

It is not assumed, however, that the being in a state of grace implies necessarily the possession of Christian grace. John the Baptist was in a state of grace, even more surely than David; yet, our Saviour says, "He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." In somewhat a similar way, one cannot doubt that St. Paul's struggling convert (Rom. vii. 1), when he delighted in the law of God after the inner man, had got into a state of grace as really as David had. But it is clearly intimated that he had not what is properly Christian grace, that is, the higher influence which Christ came to bestow, until "the law of the Spirit of life" had made him free from "the law of sin and death." (Rom. viii. 2.) But more clearly still, if possible, St. Paul allows the Corinthians to be "babes

in Christ ;” though he will not allow them to be spiritual, but carnal, and, in too many (though we may infer with certainty, no gross) respects, to “ walk as men.”

Our blessed Saviour came into the world, not to contract any preëxisting circle of mercy, but to furnish means for attaining richer mercy and higher privileges. It was not for the mere forming of what St. Paul here means by babes in Christ, that Christ came. Christ came, not only that we might have life, but “ that we might have it more abundantly ;” in other words, to impart to us of his fulness and grace for grace ; that is, evidently, every grace correspondently to the graces in him. Now, this more abundant life, and this efficacious access to and participation of Christ’s fulness of grace, may be taken as strict and proper Christianity ; and to this idea, all the expressions which the apostolic writers use to describe it correspond : “ Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption (not of slavery, but of freedom), whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”—“ Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God ;” “ because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.”—“ Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith ; prove your own selves ; know ye not

your own selves, how that Jesus Christ dwelleth in you, except ye be reprobates?"—"Be careful for nothing; but, in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

These, and innumerable other passages of like import, satisfy me, that the true Christian life is not only an inward and spiritual life, but a victorious, peaceful, happy life—victorious over the world, and over sin, in every instance that is necessary to continued peace of conscience and filial access to the Father of Spirits. But we are far from thinking that he who is not thus a new man in Christ Jesus, is therefore, of necessity, not a good man, nor, in any sense, within the covenant of grace. St. Paul's spiritual man was exactly the complete Christian we describe; and yet, the Apostle calls those who were not spiritual, but carnal, "babes in Christ." In fact, we may rest assured, that every sincere endeavor to please God is, and ever must be, successful; and that, though the want of those blessings which are strictly Christian implies a real and often very painful diminution of happiness in the mind, the person, while humbly and cordially endeavoring to walk before God in truth, and with an upright mind, is substantially accepted of Him.

But then, since Christ came into the world, and

took all the pains he did to introduce into the world that higher principle of peace and happiness, it becomes most obligatory, on all who feel the extent of his design, to do what in them lies to promote the accomplishment of the purpose. Every expression implies, that though God will not now, any more than formerly, “break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax,” yet the object of the Gospel is to heal all moral bruises, and change the smoke into flame. — It is then a matter of demonstration, that this efficient view of Christianity is its appropriate view, and that justice cannot be done to it, except its full energies be distinctly exhibited. The fact is, that it is only by such a representation of Christianity, that it can ever be made fully to answer its purpose, or even to excite sufficient attention in the world, for its being examined or judged of. The cold, low, unenergetic notion of it, which is all that the most admit, is really below Cicero in moral matters, and far below Plato as to the contemplative action of the mind. In Christianity, so presented, thinking persons see nothing that warrants such movements, both in the physical and providential world, as the Christian history asserts. “*Nec Deus intersit,*” say they, “*nisi dignus vindice nodus.*”¹

¹ “Nor on this earth let heaven’s dread Ruler stand,
Unless ‘a cause’ the present God demand.”

1 SAM. xvii. 29.

They, therefore, sink into scepticism, or, perhaps, confirmed infidelity, because they do not see the reasonableness of so vast an apparatus, for a purpose so little beyond what could be accomplished by education and good laws. Thus has Christianity fallen into contempt, through pure ignorance of its nature and design. And, until this obstacle is removed, the clearest display of its external evidences, as exemplified in our Saviour's life, and taught in his precepts, will be of little or no avail.

But, if Christianity really proposes, not only to engage men to struggle with their frailties, but to make them conquerors over them; if it be a divine apparatus for transforming human minds, purifying human hearts, spiritualizing and sublimating human affections, so as to make a man superior to all things earthly, and even to himself; giving him wings, as it were, by which he rises, as to his mind, above "the smoke and stir of this dim spot," and seems to himself comparatively to dwell "in regions mild, of calm and serene air;" if Christianity really makes this offer, it is, at least, worth considering, inasmuch as this is the very object which all enlightened heathens agree in esteeming the one thing needful; and if it actually accomplishes this, it would be, by the suffrages of all the philosophers, worthy of that God whom it claims as its author. In what variety of ways does even Horace alone express the longings of human nature for such a state of moral

victory and mental peace? What but this is his
 “*otium non gemmis neque purpurâ venale nec auro?*”¹
 to which he opposes the “*miseros tumultus mentis, et
 curas laqueata circum tecta volantes.*”²

What else was in his mind when he says—

“*Navibus atque
 Quadrigis petimus bene vivere; quod petis hic est,
 Est Ulubris, animus si te non deficit æquus?*”³

The only question was, how the “*animus æquus*”
 was to be come at. This, too, was what he talked of at
 his country house with his friends:—

“*Quod magis ad nos
 Pertinet, et nescire malum est agitamus: utrumne
 Divitiis homines, an sint virtute beati;
 Quidve ad amicitias, usus rectumne, trahat nos;
 Et quæ sit natura boni, summumque quid ejus.*”⁴

¹ “Ease, unbought
 By mines of wealth, or the imperial purple.”

² “The mind’s tumultuous strife
 And cares, that dark ascend in turbid wreaths,
 Sullying joy’s gilded ceilings.”

³ “We crowd the sail, we urge the chariot’s speed,
 To gladden life, to find the joy we need;
 Here, or in Ulubræ, that joy we find,
 Deep in the centre of a balanced mind.”

⁴ “Here we discuss, what most for weal or wo
 Concerns ourselves, and shames us not to know,

And still more strongly in this most beautiful passage:—

“Inter cuncta leges, et percunctabere doctos
 Quâ ratione queas traducere leniter ævum ;
 Ne te semper inops agitet vexetque Cupido,
 Ne pavor et rerum mediocriter utilium spes:
 Quid minuat curas ; quid te tibi reddat amicum ;
 Quid purè tranquillet, honos, an dulce lucellum,
 An secretum iter, et fallentis semita vitæ.”¹

What was this but a vague longing for, and a cloudy apprehension of, “the peace of God which passeth all understanding?”

Perhaps no idea in the Greek mythology had a greater tendency to raise the mind of a poet to some visionary anticipation of this chief object of the human heart than that of the Muses. They are regarded as

If most delight in wealth or virtue lies ;
 Which forms our friendship's ordinary ties,
 The sense of interest, or the love of right ;
 What is true good, and where its utmost height.”

¹ “Here shalt thou read, and learn in wisdom's school
 The purest knowledge, by what happy rule
 Life may be taught to steal in peace away,
 No more to restless, vain desires a prey
 By vexing cares and fears no more oppress'd,
 By hopes of objects little worth at best ;
 What best may soothe thy sorrows ; where to find
 Calm self-contentment, and the approving mind.”

the calmers of wrong passions, the inspirers of moral wisdom :—

“ Vos lene consilium et datis, et dato
Gaudetis almæ.” ¹

And Horace, accordingly, addresses them with something more like devotion than we find in any other part of his poetry; and looks to their presence with him as an unfailing source of happiness and safety :—

“ Vester, Camœnæ, vester in arduos
Tollor Sabinos; seu mihi frigidum
Præneste, seu Tibur supinum
Seu liquidæ placuere Baiæ!

“ Vestris amicum fontibus et choris,
Non me Philippis versa acies retro,
Devota non extinxit arbos,
Non Siculâ Palinurus undâ.

“ Utcunque mecum vos eritis, libens
Insanientem navita Bosphorum
Tentabo, et arentes arenas
Littoris Assyrii viator.” ²

¹ “ Wisdom you gently breathe, and peace inspire;
And joy yourselves in hearts that catch your fire.”

² “ Yours, ever yours, ye Nine, where'er I rove,
O'er Sabine hills, through cool Præneste's grove,
On Tibur's slope, by Baiæ's pleasant bay,
Your votary still, through every clime I stray.

That moral feeling entered strongly into this noble rhapsody, appears from the words quoted just before, which immediately follow; and from this impression, arises that picture of the Supreme Ruler, which is wonderfully just, as well as truly sublime:—

“Qui terram inertem, qui mare temporat,
Ventosque et urbes, regna que tristia,
Divosque mortalesque turmas
Imperio regit unus æquo.”¹

The concluding stanza shows, still further, in what frame he wrote:—

“Vis concilii expers mole ruit suâ;
Vim temperatum Dî quoque provehunt
In majus; idem odere vires
Omne nefas animo moventes.”²

“Me, of your sacred founts and choral rite
Enamor'd, not the dread Philippian flight,
Not that fell tree, not leaves, have leave to harm
Beneath the safeguard of your powerful charm.

“Where'er ye deign to lead my wandering way,
Your presence soothes, and your smiles repay;
Ye bid the angry ocean roar in vain,
And shed a grace o'er parch'd Assyria's plain.”

¹ “The sluggish earth, the seas, his bidding know,
The winds, the haunts of men, the realms below;
And Gods above, and mortals here, obey
The sole dominion of his equal sway.”

² “Brute force alone by its own weight breaks down;
But heaven delights with ampler means to crown

These quotations show most strikingly to what quarter the human mind points in its pantings after happiness ; how deeply it feels its need of something besides itself to rest upon ; and how instinctively it fixes on Deity, omnipresent ; sublimely, yet gently influential ; averting evil, making even dreariness delightful. How much in the very spirit of Addison !

“How are thy servants blessed, O Lord,
How sure is their defence ;
Eternal wisdom is their guide,
Their help, Omnipotence.

“In distant lands, and realms remote,
Supported by thy care,
Through burning climes I pass’d unhurt,
And breathed in tainted air.

“Thy mercy sweeten’d every toil,
Made every region please ;
The hoary Alpine hills it warm’d
And smoothed the Tyrrhene seas.”

Such, then, on the whole, were the cravings of the human mind, in the most enlightened and improved state it could be in short of Revelation. And are

That power which mind and reason regulate ;
Just heaven, which visits with avenging hate
That selfsame power, how high soe’er it climb,
By bold abuse subservient made to crime.”

not all of them, even those seemingly fanciful ones in the ode last quoted, significant of its greatness, and worthy of an immortal creature? Might it not be fairly expected, then, that, when God should actually reveal himself to man, He should do it in such a manner as to meet these cravings, and effectually lead the human heart to the peace and happiness which it longed for? The low, unenergetic view of Christianity presents no such correspondence; but the spiritualizing, renovating, efficient view, which is here described from the New Testament, meets every one of those cravings with consummate congruity. What could be more in point, to all these ideas of moral self-government, and self-enjoyment, than our Saviour's invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," &c.? And that other exquisite passage, "He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but he that drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Another passage is strictly applicable to this, as the explanation of it: "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." St. John vii. 38.

"Felix, qui potuit boni
Fontem visere lucidum," ¹

¹ "Happy the gifted soul, whose inward sense
Can pierce the fount of Good's bright effluence."

said Boethius, expressing, by this, the chief wish of all true philosophy. He was a Christian; but his book, “*De Consolatione Philosophiæ*,” is Platonic, not evangelic. This coincidence of expression with our Saviour’s, is strictly, therefore, the agreement of sound philosophy with it; *i. e.* of human nature, sufficiently enlightened to know its own wishes. If, then, Horace’s “*otium*” be that inward tranquillity, which a man can enjoy only by, in effect, flying from himself (“*Patriæ quis exul se quoque fugit?*”),¹ is not this, most strictly, what is described in the New Testament as a putting off the old man, and putting on the new, which is “renewed in knowledge, after the image of Him that created him?” and when St. Paul’s inner man “is made free, by the law of the Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, from the law of sin, which was in the members,” is not this, in the completest sense, “*se fugere*” (to leave himself behind)?

If Horace ask, “*Quæ sit natura boni, summumque quid ejus?*” our Saviour describes his true followers, as having not only made the discovery, but got possession of the treasure; for what but this is “the one pearl of great price,” to purchase which the genuine Christian has parted with all. “*Quid minuat curas, quid purè tranquillet?*” says Horace. A text already quoted, Phil. iv. 6, 7, “Be careful for nothing,” &c., and “the peace

¹ “What wanderer ever left himself behind?”

of God," &c., "shall keep your hearts," &c., answers his queries, critically and superabundantly.

"Quid te tibi reddat amicum?" St. Paul replies, "I would to God that not only thou, but all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether, such as I am." This, and this only, is the language of happiness,

"The soul's calm sunshine, and the heartfelt joy."

What, again, is Horace's "*animus æquus*," but that which is the kernel of Christianity?—"to be spiritually minded is life and peace." "*Est Ulubris*," said he, but St. Paul out-realized this far; for he found it in the inner prison, with his feet fast in the stocks. It cannot be denied, but that in this case some extraordinary influences might have been afforded. But St. Paul's daily and hourly feeling was, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." It was his daily and hourly feeling; else he could not have said, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content;" this is the avowal of a completely confirmed habit; which, however, rested essentially on that almost derived Omnipotence, with which he concludes his wonderful statement; which statement, by the way, Phil. iv. 11, 12, 13, is the solid reality of that which Horace dreamed about so sweetly in the aforesaid ode, "*Descende cœlo*," &c.

"Auditis! an me ludit amabilis

Insania! audire et videor pios

Errare per lucos, amœnæ
Quos et aquæ, subeunt et auræ.”¹

How instinctively does he here seize on the very images used by David, when he anticipates the happiness of true Christians, in the guidance and presence of Him who was “to feed his flock like a shepherd!”—“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.” But the passage to which chief allusion is made, is that in which Horace declares his readiness to go anywhere, if the Muses would only go with him,—

“Utunque mecum vos eritis, libens.”

This sublime allusion is, in St. Paul, plain downright fact. He is ready—not in a way of rant or enthusiasm, but in sober earnest—to go anywhere; because he has learned to enjoy himself in any circumstances, in virtue of those resources which he is ever deriving from Omnipotent goodness. David’s high expression fitted him exactly, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art

¹ “Hear ye? or mocks my maddening brain
Some vision? some ideal strain
Of false, but lovely song?
I hear, I wander through the groves
Whose streams, whose airs, inspire those loves
That melt the heavenly throng.”

with me.”—“*Insanientem navita Bosphorum tentabo*,” says Horace ; but St. Paul describes a feeling which he had actually exerted. “Thrice,” says he, “I suffered shipwreck ; a night and a day I have been in the deep. In journeyings often ; in perils of waters ; in perils of robbers ; in perils by my own countrymen ; in perils by the heathen ; in perils in the city ; in perils in the wilderness ; in perils in the sea.”—“But,” as he says elsewhere, “none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy.”

Are we not then warranted to maintain, that the very highest flights of Horace’s fancy did not rise above St. Paul’s Christianity ? and that, consequently, this realizes, not only the philosophical speculations, but the poetical dreams, of mental happiness ? At first view we might be thought to do little honor to Christianity, by supposing any parallel between its comforts and pleasures, and those which Horace hoped for from the influence of the Muses. But let an observation already made be kept in view ; that is, respecting the high moral feeling which the ode referred to glows with, and the attributes which are given to the imaginary deities invoked ; and it will be felt, that no mere Pagan could have conceived ideas more strongly marked with the natural thirst of the human spirit, after divine, infinite good. If a middle link between Horace and St. Paul were necessary, we would point out Milton’s invocation

of the Blessed Spirit, in the beginning of the seventh book of the *Paradise Lost*, under the name of “*Urania*,”

“By that name
If rightly thou art call’d,” &c. &c.;

in which noble passage, the poetry of Horace is completely paralleled, and the Christian piety of St. Paul copied by a kindred spirit, imbibing heavenly influences from the same inexhaustible source ; so that, where both are viewed from this middle point, the purple and gold with which Horace’s cloud is arrayed, seems clearly an unconscious reflection of that yet unrisen Sun whose full light and warmth St. Paul is enjoying. Indeed this holds good, in some degree, of all poetical sublimity ; every image of the sublime being a reflected ray of Deity ; and Addison admirably observes, “that one of the final causes of our delight in anything that is great may be this : The supreme author of our being has so formed the soul of man, that nothing but Himself can be its last adequate and proper happiness. Because, therefore, a great part of our happiness must arise from the contemplation of his being, that He might give our souls a just relish of such a contemplation, He has made them naturally delight in the apprehension of what is great or unlimited.” If we apply, then, this admirable remark to the passages which have been quoted from Horace, will not all that has been said of

their unconscious reference to the approaching blessedness of Christianity acquire new strength? If every species of the sublime be, in some sort, a shadowing of Deity, and excite in the mind some tendency, however vague, toward the mysterious archetype of greatness, the rule must peculiarly hold good in instances of the moral sublime: for it will scarcely be doubted, that moral nature has even a much higher capacity of rising to the sublime, than anything physical or material; and it will be found, on an attentive view, that heathenism never produced grander instances of the moral sublime, than are to be found in some of the passages of Horace which have been referred to, or in another not yet mentioned; it is that consummate picture of a just man, in the beginning of the third ode of the third book:—

“Justum et tenacem propositi virum
Non civium ardor prava jubentium,
Non vultus instantis tyranni
Mente quatit solidâ, neque auster

Dux inquieti turbidus Adriæ,
Nec fulminantis magna Jovis manus :
Si fractus illabatur orbis
Impavidum ferient ruinæ.”¹

¹ “The man of strong resolve, and just design,
When, for bad ends, infuriate mobs combine,
Or gleams the terror of the monarch’s frown,
Firm in his rock-based worth, on both looks down.

We cannot help again asking, is not this St. Paul? In no human being, surely, was every possible part of this picture so substantially realized. One question only, therefore, remains to be answered, in order to make these observations apply to Christianity in general. Did St. Paul exemplify that complex of virtue and happiness, which heathen poetry, as well as heathen philosophy, thus panted for, as man's chief good,—in virtue of his apostolic endowments, or in consequence of his Christian graces? In that fortitude, that equanimity, that superiority to the world and to human frailty, that happy contentedness in all conditions, which so nobly marked his whole character and conduct, did he exhibit what was peculiar to himself and his apostolic brethren, or what all Christians, in all ages, if they faithfully avail themselves of the aids of their holy religion, may participate in and attain to? In order to answer this question, one need only recur to those expressions of our Saviour and his apostles, which have been already quoted; inasmuch as they evidently describe such a frame of mind as that which St. Paul manifested (doubtless in the highest degree), and yet they speak of that frame as the effect of the ordinary influences of God's divine Spirit. It is not miraculous faith, but Christian

“ On the vexed sea, when fierce tornadoes rise,
Serene he dares the waves, and marks the skies.
If central fires should rend earth's solid ball,
Unscared he meets, unhurt survives her fall.”

faith, which they portray. If this could be doubted, other scriptures might be brought abundantly to confirm it. "Who is he," says St. John, "that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith:" "whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world."—"Ye are dead," says St. Paul, "and your life is hid with Christ in God." "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God; and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."—"Whom having not seen, ye love," says St. Peter: "In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls:" which last words, by the way, appear to me most clearly to imply, that Christian salvation is not merely a future thing, but that it commences here, in that divine change, which all the above texts agree in asserting, and to which St. Peter had just before attributed a security like that which is derived from an impregnable garrison; "who are kept," says he (as in a garrison), "by the power of God, through faith unto (final) salvation." These characters of true, complete Christianity, are so uniform throughout the New Testament, that it might be asked,—if this filial, victorious, peaceful, happy state be not Christianity, what other description of it can be collected? if all

these high attainments were merely apostolical, where shall we find an account of the benefits to be enjoyed, or the blessings to be aimed at, by Christians of following ages? In fact, as, where there is but one thing of a kind, there is no danger of mistaking it for some other similar thing, so, there being no Christianity described in the New Testament but this high, heavenly, transformative Christianity, it must be granted, that this is the state to which God calls us, and into which He is graciously ready to bring us, if we seek his mercy and grace as his word directs us. Is it not, then, a work worthy of God, that what human nature in its noblest elevations, its purest tastes, its most ardent and sublime conceptions, looked toward and longed after, should at length, in his due time, be brought within man's reach? And is not the perfect correspondence of that liberty with which the Son of God makes free, with these anticipations, a subject worthy of attention, and replete with satisfaction and delight? Who that reads and compares these two sets of quotations, can avoid allowing their wonderful harmony? And what can we infer, on the whole, but that the deepest views of Christianity are those which best, which alone, indeed, accord with the obvious, and otherwise unprovided for, exigencies of human nature? They are clearly the deepest wants, and the most anxious cravings of our nature, which these quotations from Horace describe, and which, if unprovided

for, would imply a deficiency in the great economy of this world, utterly unlike what appears in any other instance. In fact, if that *otium* which men pant for, were not anywhere to be found, it would follow, that, while every trivial want and wish of animal man was superabundantly provided for, the great central appetite of intellectual man, which designates him as God's chief work in the visible creation, was abandoned to the self-torture of irremediable vacuity. What, then, is more consonant to rational supposition, than that this want should be supplied, and, consequently, that Christianity should be of a nature adequate, in every respect, to this invaluable purpose?

It is to be lamented that too many writers, who imagined themselves the truest church-of-England men, have almost entirely overlooked this felicitating influence of our divine religion. They have considered the Christian system as so imperceptibly efficacious, that he who walks in their path is to hope for no other comfort or happiness than that which naturally grows out of his own progressive endeavors. "Whatever grace," says Dr. Scott in his Christian life, "the Spirit of God now affords us, it ordinarily works on us in the same way, and after the same manner, as if all were performed by the strength of our own reason; so that, in the renovation of our natures, we cannot certainly distinguish what is done by the Spirit from what is done by our reason and conscience coöperating with him."

(Vol. iii. p. 80.) If Dr. Scott meant merely, that the Spirit of God, in the act of influencing, is not certainly distinguishable from the natural motions of our minds, or animal spirits, no sober Christian would dispute the position. But his expressions go further, and seem to imply that the effects are as indistinct as the operation; we cannot distinguish what is done by the Spirit from what is done by our "reason and conscience." Much of the same kind is Bishop Watson's assertion, in his address to persons confirmed: "The manner," says he, "in which the Holy Spirit gives his assistance to pious persons, is not attended with any certain sign of its being given; it is secret and unknown. You cannot distinguish the working by which he helpeth your infirmities from the ordinary operations of your own minds."

But, on this view, would it not be reasonable to ask, what does Christianity do for us? or wherein consists its value, if it produces no perceptible effects? We have reason and conscience inherent in our nature, and we can form a pretty clear estimate of what they are competent to effect, by reflecting on what passes in our own bosoms. If, then, the additional influences of God's Holy Spirit bring with them no additional effects, no certain sign of their being given, what benefit do we derive from our Saviour's coming into the world? what is that rest which he promised? that "well of water" within the soul, "springing up into everlasting

life?" what that "peace of God which passeth all understanding?" How, indeed, could it pass any understanding, if it were not to be distinguished from what is done by reason and conscience? or what meant our divine Redeemer, when he said in his last discourse, "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him?" This was beyond the comprehension of the apostles, and, therefore, one of them asked, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" If, therefore, the expressions used by our Saviour had really meant nothing but the comfort arising from enlightened reason and a tolerably quiet conscience, now would be the time for so stating the fact. But the answer repeats the foregoing assertion, in terms still less capable of any cold, or merely rational construction. "If any man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Nay, more, as if our Lord considered the spiritual happiness which these elevated expressions represent, as the grandest object he could propose to excite the warmth of cold and languid minds, he uses almost the very same idea in his apocalyptic message to the angel of the church of Laodicea: "Behold," says he, "I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open unto me, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me."

But, on closer consideration, a difference presents itself. "To come in and sup" answers more to the idea of a visit than a fixed residence; it is, therefore, to be inferred, that, though both expressions must infallibly mean such divine and spiritual influences as far transcend what mere reason or conscience could effect in the mind, yet there is a difference of degree and measure, as far as "to come in and sup with" one, falls short of stated residence.

And there is an obvious fitness in this difference, for the promise in the Gospel is made to him who loveth Christ, and, in consequence of that love, keepeth his words; which clearly implies a confirmed and effectual attachment. In this case, therefore, the blessing is that of permanent abode, both of the Father and the Son; whereas the apocalyptic promise is made to a much lower degree of right conduct, viz. to the first opening of the heart to our Saviour. Here is to be a gracious and consolatory visit from himself alone, which, however difficult to be clearly explained, must have a solid correspondent meaning; else the all-wise Son of God would not have used the terms, nor have thus strikingly varied his language.

With both these passages, however, other passages of the New Testament respectively correspond, and by comparing them both together, some degree of elucidation may be obtained; at least the deep and entire spirituality of our Lord's meaning, in both instances,

may be made more apparent. "As new-born babes," says St. Peter, "desire the sincere milk of the word,"—"if so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." Now, does not this "tasting that the Lord is gracious," which the Apostle here seems to consider as inseparable from the spiritual new birth of a genuine Christian, appear to mean the same thing with what our Saviour promises to him who "opens unto him?" Both expressions mark precisely the same period of the Christian course; and both equally denote such a communication of the grace of Christ, as the mind must be sensible of, and powerfully impressed with. Nothing less can be implied in Christ's coming into the soul, and supping with it, and it with him; and what St. Peter speaks of ("if so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious") presents to us the idea of an inward perception, similarly felicitating, and having the same divine person of Trinity for its object. It is also observable, that this very idea is elsewhere used respecting the same class of persons, that is, new converts. "It is impossible," says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance." We are not inquiring what these latter words mean, nor would we dispute with any who

would assert that, in some of the first expressions, there is a reference to the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit: but this we venture to say, that to taste the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, are expressions which will bear no other than a moral or spiritual meaning, and yet no less necessarily imply an inward mental sensation, of a kind substantially distinct from, and superior to, all that should come from mere reason or conscience. This might be further illustrated from various passages of the Acts and the Epistles, such as the Ethiopian nobleman going on his way “rejoicing” (Acts viii. 39); in that passage, “then had the churches rest,” &c.—“and walking in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied” (ix. 31); and in that of the newly converted jailer, who “rejoiced, believing on God with all his house” (xvi. 34). Indeed, our Saviour himself seems to intimate this, when, in likening his Spirit to treasure hid in the field, which a man findeth, he adds, “and for joy thereof he goeth and selleth all,” &c., &c.

In quoting these passages, it is not meant to insist on any exact parallel, either in manner or degree, between the operations of grace here described, and what is absolutely necessary to feel in order to salvation. These circumstances, no doubt, greatly differed from each other then, and there may be additional grounds for such differences to-day; but they are adduced to show the

general bearing of Scripture, in congruity with the expressions of our Lord first quoted ; and it is to be seen, from this concurrent tendency, that the cold rationalizing scheme of religion has no countenance in the sacred word ; but that, on the contrary, Christianity, when it works in its own appropriate way, must so work, as to be felt throughout all the powers of the soul, in those enlightening, purifying, quickening, spiritualizing, and, of course, felicitating effects, which differ as much from all that mere reason and conscience can excite, as the cheering sunbeams differ from the mid-night moonshine.

But, if this appears in passages of Scripture which describe the first workings of Christian influences in the heart, how much more must it be manifested in those which describe Christian maturity !—those which connect with our Saviour's higher promise, "I and my Father will come and make our abode with him." On this head one passage is adduced, because we soberly think it cannot be added to : that is St. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians (ch. iii. 14) : "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family both in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints,

what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Now let these words be weighed without prejudice ; and do they not obviously and incontrovertibly imply a state of the human mind, necessarily distinguishable from everything to which man ever raised himself? Do they not answer, with perfect correspondence, to our Lord's promise of the spiritual coming of him, and of his Father into the heart? "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith," and "that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God!" Can we then form too high an idea of the spiritual blessedness here referred to? or annex any other possible sense to the expressions used throughout the entire passage, than those of habitual victory, unspeakable peace, unshaken establishment, profound self-enjoyment, unblemished purity of purpose, and perfect filial affiance in and access to the eternal Father of spirits and fountain of happiness? Yet, all these ideas, magnificent as they are, come not up to St. Paul's estimate of Christian attainments ; for, as if unsatisfied with all he had said, he adds, "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh within us ; unto Him be glory in the Church, throughout all ages, world without end, Amen." In these words, then, understood in the soberest manner, there is, altogether, a view of

Christianity, which supports everything stated, and realizes everything quoted. It is, in fact, the representation of very heaven upon earth:—

“Then shalt thou not be loath
To leave this paradise—but shalt possess
A paradise within thee happier far.”

Of such an inward paradise, we have here the unquestionable description, containing all, and much more than all, that ever was imagined by the most elevated human mind.

It might easily be shown, that the sublime Christianity thus described by St. Paul, and thus answering to so many ardent pantings and preconceptions of even the heathen world, is no more than was anticipated by the Old Testament Prophets; and that nothing short of this would be a complete verification of the frequent images of happiness, both in the Psalms and prophetic writings, where we find everything which yields pure, natural, exalted delight, throughout nature, brought to illustrate the expected state of things. From what has been stated a question naturally arises, which demands an answer.

“In what view, after all, are we to understand these scriptures, if literally interpreted, as the above remarks seem to suppose they should be, so as still to preserve the rationality of religion, to secure it from the charge of enthusiasm, and to afford no encourage-

ment to persons who are themselves enthusiastically disposed?" To this we reply, that there can be no need to abate the strength of any of the above expressions, in order to guard them from fanatical abuse; on the contrary, we rather think that attempts of that kind have peculiarly served the cause of fanaticism. The jejune interpretations of such writers as those mentioned above, have so evidently fallen below the force and fulness of the text, as to make their comment a kind of concession to fanatics, that Scripture, in its strict sense, was really with them. In order therefore to secure the rationality of Christianity, as well as its depth and energy, these passages, instead of being loaded or diluted, ought to be dispassionately investigated, in the confidence that the Spirit of God has suffered nothing to enter into the sacred volume, of whose clear and uncoerced meaning we need entertain any apprehension.

What, then, is that high state of Christian attainment, which the strongest of these texts describe, but the being impressed with certain incontrovertible facts, to the degree and in the manner which, considering the interest we have in those facts, strict common sense itself would dictate? If the Gospel be true, it is a concern of such magnitude as should in all reason be paramount in our minds; and the Gospel being indubitably and irrefragably true, its not being thus paramount implies the grossest and most irrational infatua-

tion. But why has it not this ascendancy? St. Paul answers, "The animal man knoweth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;" that is, the Gospel is diametrically opposite to the taste of depraved human nature; the unchanged, unpurified heart goes quite another way, and the understanding goes along with it; taste dictating to understanding in almost every instance in this world. An inward influence of divine grace, therefore, is necessary, to dispel this delirious dream, to rationalize the mind, and to liberate the higher faculties from their captivity to the lower; to emancipate thought and ratiocination from that inner prison of sense, wherein their feet are, as it were, made fast in the stocks of appetite and passion. When this is once fully done, or in proportion as it is done, the facts of religion, as recorded in Scripture, and borne witness to by internal conscience and external nature, are apprehended as facts; and proportionably to their being thus apprehended, do they engage, and influence, and felicitate the soul. Reason and conscience informed the heathen sages that there was a chief good of man, compared with which earth and all its seductive contents were very vanity. They saw that this chief good implied predominant virtue in man; but they did not clearly, though some, in part, did, see that the soul of virtue is to love the living source of virtue. But to them this

living source of virtue was little more than undefined, as well as unapproachable, brightness. This, however, is actually defined to us in the Gospel, in a manner fitted, by the very skill of God himself, to attract, inform, and satisfy our minds; to operate, in the aptest way conceivable, on all our passions and affections; to subdue all that is evil in us; to quicken, exalt, and make ascendant, all that is rational and noble in us; to engage us in looking at the things which are not seen, and to enable us to endure, as seeing Him that is invisible. The facts of the Gospel need only to be fully felt, in order to these effects being produced. "We," says St. Paul, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image."

What, then, is really the difference between the merely rational and the spiritual Christian? Is it that the latter receives an hypothesis which the former rejects? Not merely, or chiefly, this; but, rather, that the one is more deeply impressed by the indisputable facts of Christianity than the other. The one feels, while the other only reads or hears. Why was it that, through the death of the Son of God, the world was crucified to St. Paul, and he to the world? Clearly, because he apprehended this fact, in rational proportion to its weight and magnitude; and he who at this day is enabled, by the grace of God, to contemplate the same divine object with equal realization, becomes inspired with the same holy temper. "Ye shall know

the truth," said our Saviour, "and the truth shall make you free."—"Faith," says an apostolic writer, "is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." What is this but the apprehending of divine things as realities? He who finds himself in a storm on shipboard, needs not argue himself into alarm, nor strive to recollect all the various circumstances of danger. If, therefore, divine and eternal things do once impress themselves on the mind as facts, religion will grow out of that impression by a necessity of nature; and, in proportion to its strength, it will influence all the movements both of the inner and outward man.

The making this impression, then, is the great operation of Divine grace. Man cannot give it to himself; we are made sensible of this, times without number. When we wish to rise above worldly uneasiness, or to resist alarming temptations, we endeavor to call up stronger feelings of religion, as our sole resource: but experience tells us how little we can do in this way; and even our very endeavors are too often cold and half-hearted; we are conscious that, if our sense of God, of Christ, of heaven, and of hell, was more lively, we should find it our best support, both against trouble and temptation. If, then, after many such ineffectual wishes and endeavors, we feel those things at length taking real hold of our mind,—so that the awful apprehension of eternal things excites in us a salutary and

effectual watchfulness, and the warm sense of the divine excellence engages and spiritualizes our affections, raising them to high and heavenly objects, and, by that means, making us superior to temptations by which hitherto we were led captive,—this, I conceive, he who feels it will never attribute to mere reason or conscience, or to any less cause than His influence who quickeneth all things.

But, though it be divine, it is most rational. It is, indeed, a felt return to right reason, after frenzy: “When he came to himself,” says our Saviour of the prodigal: all before was infatuation. Now, for the first time, the mind begins to discover realities. It perceives that its former insensibility to these was an absolute sleep of the soul, and that it only then awoke, when it became sensible of them. In such feeling, then, the genuine religion of the Gospel commences: and, as the matter-of-fact persuasion of divine things increases, it increases also, until all painful conflict is put an end to, by the decided ascendancy of spiritual objects and attachments.

It is in this sense, that so much efficacy is attributed to faith by our Saviour and his apostles: “How is it that ye have no faith?”—“It is because ye have no faith.”—“By faith Moses endured, as seeing him who is invisible.” To have faith, then, is to have that lively sense of divine things, which makes them efficient on our hearts, and tempers, and con-

ducts. It is self-evident that such a sense, in proportion to its strength, must produce this effect ; and it is equally clear that, when it is strong, it will imply the clear consciousness of its own existence in the mind : such a consciousness, however, will necessarily set a man in complete peace as to his spiritual state ; and from his sense of divine things, and that peace conjointly, will arise multiform comforts, and satisfactions, and instances of continued advancement, answering to everything which St. Paul has described, in the unparalleled passage quoted above, from his Epistle to the Ephesians, iii. 14.

The more this subject is considered, the more evident it is, that the radical, substantial disagreement between the merely moral Christian and the experimentalist, is, that the former has a weaker sense of the religious facts recorded in the Scripture than the latter. If these be felt only as they should be, the consequences are infallible. When, therefore, such consequences are not found, the influence ought to be, not difference of judgment, nor different habits of intellect, but actual deficiency in the radical principle.

It is fully conceded, that differences of temper and mind have their great effects ; and, therefore, allowance must be made for much variety in degree and circumstance. A man who has not quick sensibilities in matters of this life, will probably have proportionably weak, or rather less impassioned feeling of divine and

eternal things : but, perhaps, this makes little difference on the whole ; for they who are deficient in any one faculty, have it generally made up, to a competent degree, in some other ; and thus, he who is apparently cold in affection, may have solider judgment, and steadier resolution. These qualities, therefore, will, in religious matters, make up abundantly for want of warmth, if, as has been said, the matter-of-fact apprehension be at the bottom ; and, though such minds seldom feel ecstatic pleasure, they, if faithful to divine grace, are compensated, in a more uniform peace of conscience, and a deeper, because reflective, sense of satisfaction. The influential facts of the Gospel are ineffably adjusted to all possible minds. The person of a poetical mind finds them set off by every adjunct that can engage his warmest imagination ; while the person of a practical mind discovers a substantiality of excellence, which at once satisfies his coolest reason, and attaches every moral principle of his nature.

We see, through life, that, in most cases, persons find some way of doing what they are strongly inclined to. If talents be wanting, it will not be so well done ; but it is a fact, however, that strong inclination seldom wholly fails of its object. Thus if piety be real, it will not fail of its purpose for want of natural warmth of affection. There is always enough of this for the purposes of life ; and where sentiment is deficient, principle well supplies its room. Let a sense of divine

things be once predominant, and it will produce its due effects, let the constitutional turn be what it may ; it will engage whatever powers a man's mind possesses, and these will always be enough ; for where religion finds not strong affections to work by, it, consequently, has not strong passions to subdue. In all tempers and habits, therefore, if divine things be only practically apprehended as matters of fact, the effect will be in substance the same, whatever may be the circumstantial variety. All men, whatever be their tempers, would shudder at feeling the shock of an earthquake, and would alike avoid a pestilential contagion. If we can suppose, then, the great things of eternity so impressed upon our minds, as to make them be felt as real facts, we certainly suppose a case, at least, as much fitted to subdue all minds, and work upon all tempers, as either the earthquake or the pestilence.

That divine things may thus be impressed on the mind, is made plain to us by a matter of fact which often occurs,—that is, the powerful apprehensions which are felt by so many persons on the real or supposed approach of death. In such cases, how astonishingly quick-sighted do persons become, both as to sins and duties ; and what a distinct view have they, both of what they actually are, and what they ought to have been ! Of course this must be in proportion to their knowledge, thus far,—that he who has no knowledge at all would scarcely be susceptible of such feelings ;

and he who has much knowledge, and abused it, would be liable to such feelings in a more poignant degree. But the truth is, that, in this most awful case, a little knowledge goes very far, when the conscience is thoroughly alarmed. This latter faculty quickly communicates its light to the understanding ; and the man acquires more sound sense in an hour, perhaps, than he had gained throughout his whole life before : were he to recover, and retain exactly this view of things, what an altered person he would be ! He would be grave, and modest, and circumspect, as to himself ; humane, benevolent, and indulgent, toward his fellow-creatures ; and, above all, he would walk conscientiously and humbly with his God. His near view of eternity has already convinced him powerfully that he ought to be possessed of all those tempers ; consequently, a still deeper and more confirmed view would actually inspire him with all those very dispositions ; for, in moral matters, to desire and possess differ in degree rather than reality. He who desires a right temper, loves it ; and, if that love be strong enough, it actually becomes the wished for temper. What, then, is the faith we have been speaking of, but such a feeling fixed in the mind, independently of outward vicissitudes, as has been just described as growing out of extreme illness ? It is such a realizing sense of divine things, as makes them have the impressiveness of present facts. This is the apprehension of the alarmed dying man : the world which he had doted

on, now proves the empty shadow ; and that invisible world, which, till now, he had scarcely thought of, seems to him the only substance. Reason tells us at once what an effect this temper would have, if it were to be permanent : the same reasoning informs us, no less clearly, what results must arise from that faith which is established in the heart by the operation of God. “Blessed art thou,” said our Saviour to St. Peter, “for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, which is in heaven.”

It may be asked, “But is it possible for a man in health, and moving through the world, to have anything like those impressions of eternal and invisible things, which dying men have ?” To this we reply, that what is represented in Scripture as the central principle of all true religion, must, in the nature of things, be possible. But this realizing feeling of invisible things is so represented, particularly through the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The word feeling is used because no weaker word will do justice to the views given in that passage of Scripture. But we mean nothing mystical, except the deep mysteriousness of the power which works the effect ; for the very impossibility, which is so often alleged, of such an apprehension being attainable at all, is an indirect acknowledgment that man cannot give it to himself, and illustrates what is said above, that he who possesses it is satisfied that mere reason and conscience could

not have produced it. Let it not, however, be thought, that because this faith is compared to the feeling of a dying man, there is, therefore, anything gloomy or morbid in it. All that has been said guards fully against this supposition. The sick man's feeling is gloomy, because it is forced upon him, and because it condemns him; but he who has the same realizing view in the midst of life and death, feels it to be the very dawn of an eternal day; and he rejoices in it, and is cheered by it, as he rejoices, who, having been benighted in a dreary way, perceives, at length, that morning is actually breaking upon him:—

“As when a scout
Through dark and desert ways with peril gone
All night, at last, by break of cheerful dawn,
Obtains the brow of some high climbing hill,
Which to his eye discovers, unawares,
The goodly prospect of some foreign land
First seen, or some renown'd metropolis
With glistening spires and pinnacles adorned,
Which now the rising sun gilds with his beams.”

Dr. Johnson admirably observes, that “whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses, whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future, predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings.” Nothing, surely, can be more self-evident; and this is the identical purpose to which the parent grace of revealed religion, faith, is consummately adapted by

the allwise God. In his goodness and his wisdom, he has so formed us as to make our minds naturally liable to be ruled by some one predominant object, and the feeling which it excites; so that, in fact, there is at all times, in active and ardent minds especially, some master-passion, which rules all for the time, while God and eternal things are forgotten. This disposition of man makes him a slave to an endless variety of tyrants. But, when the light of truth shines upon the mind, this tendency becomes the instrument of inestimable benefit: it sets the feelings, then first generated, at the head of all the powers and passions, and transforms slavery and degradation and wretchedness into reason and order, dignity and happiness. In fact, our love is ourselves: if we love base things we are base; if we love trifling things we are triflers; if we love earthly things we are worldly; and by parity of reason, when we love divine and eternal things, we are spiritual and heavenly. Faith, then, is simply such an apprehension, as makes the things apprehended the object of supreme love; and, when we are inwardly conscious, and outwardly perceive the fruits of such faith and such love, what, on this side heaven, can be thought of, more truly noble, or more absolutely happy?

“This,” says Sir Matthew Hale, “gives the law not only to a man’s words and actions, but to his very thoughts and purposes; so that he dares not entertain a very thought unbecoming the presence of that God to

whom all our thoughts are legible. It regulates and governs the passions of the mind, and brings them into due moderation and frame; it gives a man a right estimate of this present world, and sets his heart and hopes above it, so that he never loves it more than it deserves: it makes the wealth and glory of this world, high places and great preferments, but of a low and little value to him; so that he is neither covetous, nor ambitious, nor over-solicitous about the advantages of it: it brings a man to that frame, that righteousness, justice, honesty, and fidelity are, as it were, part of his nature; he can sooner die than commit or purpose that which is unjust, dishonest, or unworthy a good man; it makes him value the love of God, and peace of conscience, above all the wealth and honors of the world, and be very vigilant to keep it inviolably: though he be under a due apprehension of the love of God to him, yet it keeps him humble and watchful, and free from all presumption, so that he dares not, under a vain confidence of the indulgent favor and mercy of God, turn aside to commit, or purpose, even the least injury to man: he performs all his duties to God, in sincerity and integrity, and constancy; and, while he lives on earth, his conversation, his hopes, his treasure, and the flower of his expectation, are in heaven; and he entirely endeavors to walk suitably to such a hope. In sum, it restores the image of God unto the soul, in righteousness and true holiness:"

“ ‘ *Compositum jus fasque animo, sanctosque recessus
Mentis, et incoctum generoso pectus honesto.* ’ ” ¹

The whole of Judge Hale's life and writings evince what he here describes was copied from his own life and heart. This could be put beyond the shadow of doubt by other quotations; but after just observing how powerfully these two noble lines from Persius harmonize with the former quotations from Horace, we will add another instance of Christian victoriousness, taken professedly from a good man's own bosom: “In the midst of all,” says Doddridge, after referring to clouds of calumny with which he was encompassed, “my soul dwells at ease in God, and I find unutterable pleasure in a conquest obtained over those resentments which are ready to rise on such occasions, but which I can truly say, are crucified on the Cross of Christ!” When one reads this, can one help exclaiming, What a blessing is genuine Christianity, which thus wonderfully changes the bitterest trials of life, into sources of inconceivable satisfaction! Is not this exactly what our Lord promised:—“In the world ye shall have tribulation; but in me ye shall have peace?” Is it not an exquisite exemplification of what David so beautifully says: “Thou shalt hide him privily by thine own

¹ Conscience and law in moral bond combined ;—
The pure recesses of a holy mind
And honor's self, within the generous heart enshrined.

presence from the provoking of all men; thou shalt keep him secretly in thy pavilion, from the strife of tongues?"—If the unconsciousness of evil be not unjustly deemed a wall of brass, what is it thus to "dwell under the defence of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty?"

It is remarkable, that there is nothing supposed here which the sober and unenthusiastic Addison does not strictly recognize and most admirably describe. "We (says he), who have this veil of flesh standing between us and the world of spirits, must be content to know that the Spirit of God is present with us, by the effects which he produces in us. Our outward senses are too gross to apprehend him: we may taste and see how gracious he is, by his influence upon our minds; by those virtuous thoughts which he awakens in us; by those secret comforts and refreshments which he conveys into our souls; and by those ravishing joys and inward satisfactions which are perpetually springing up, and diffusing themselves among the thoughts of good men. He is lodged in their very essence, and is as a soul within the soul, to irradiate its understanding, rectify its will, purify its passions, and enliven all the powers of man. How happy, therefore, is an intellectual being, who by prayer and meditation, by virtue and good works, opens this communication between God and his own soul! Though the whole creation frowns upon him, and all nature looks black about him,

he has his light and support within him, that are able to cheer his mind, and bear him up in the midst of all those horrors that encompass him; he knows that his Helper is at hand, and is always nearer to him than anything can be which is capable of annoying or terrifying him. In the midst of calumny or contempt, he attends to that Being who whispers better things within his soul, and whom he looks upon as his defender, his glory, and the lifter-up of his head. In his deepest solitude and retirement, he knows that he is in company with the greatest of beings; and perceives within himself such real sensations of his presence, as are more delightful than anything that can be met with in the conversation of his creatures. Even in the hour of death, he considers the pains of his dissolution to be nothing else but the breaking down of that partition which stands betwixt his soul and the light of that Being who is always present with him, and is about to manifest itself to him in fullness of joy."

Now let these three extracts be compared with what has been quoted, both from heathen poetry and holy writ, and let it be judged whether they do not add all the weight that human testimonies can give to the preceding observations. It is acknowledged that it is matured Christianity only to which these representations will fully correspond; to that "second degree of victory over sin," as Cudworth describes it, "which is such a measure of strength in the inner man, and such a

degree of crucifixion of our sinful lusts, as that a man will not knowingly and deliberately do anything that his conscience plainly tells him is a sin, though there be never so great temptations to it." Yet, where religion is pursued, at once with earnestness of mind, and in accordance with the views of the New Testament, some tastes of such happiness are generally soon perceived; and, as the mind advances in its holy and happy progress, they become more habitual: but this is to be expected only where the piety is evangelic and sincere. He who hopes (as Dr. Scott proposes in his *Christian Life*) to proceed from acts to habits, and from habits to dispositions; in other words, to transform his heart by reforming his outward conduct, will scarcely think of such inward influences, and consequently not look for them: but he who feels that to be carnally minded is death, and that the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, will no less naturally seek a cure adequate to his malady. The former, deeming his disease to be superficial, has no clear idea of any other than a superficial cure, which he doubts not will be effected by such palliatives as it is fully in his own rational and moral power to apply: the latter feels, on the contrary, that in a spiritual sense "his whole head is sick and his whole heart faint;" and that "there is a law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin." Though, therefore, he is watchful against

every appearance of evil, it is rather that he may not grow worse, than with the hope of making himself better. He feels that he is dead in trespasses and sins, and he can merely implore life from its infinite fountain. Prayer, therefore, is his sheet-anchor, and the language of David, in the fifty-first Psalm, the sentiment of his heart. We are far from saying that the feelings here described are indispensable to sincerity, but we do think they are the natural preliminaries to evangelic spirituality: for he who thus prays comes, as it were, within the very sphere of the divine influences, and seldom remains long without feeling, with David, that "it is good for him to draw nigh unto God." In such exercises of mind it is that spiritual objects are apprehended with greatest force and warmth; and, in proportion as the heart is penetrated by them, a divine light is felt, which, when once thoroughly tasted, will, by the "honest and good heart," be ever after longed for and sought after. Even the more awful matters in religion will, in this way, yield delight; because to feel these deeply is the best security against carelessness and presumption; and to be safe from these is in effect to be happy. Prayer, therefore, by such a one, will not be performed merely as a duty, but will be resorted to as the great means of gaining strength and refreshment for the soul; for it is felt that, in proportion as such spiritual sensations grow strong, temptations grow weak, wrong passions are repressed, right affections

become habitual: "the peace of God which passeth all understanding comes at length to keep the heart and mind."

"I told him," says Burnet, in his account of Lord Rochester, "that all his speculations of philosophy would not serve him in any stead to the reforming of his nature and life till he applied himself to God for inward assistance. It was certain that impressions made on his reason governed him as they were lively presented to him; but these are so apt to slip out of our memory, and we are so apt to turn our thoughts from them, and, at some times the contrary impressions are so strong, that let a man set up a reasoning in his mind against them, he finds that celebrated saying of the poet,

———'Video meliora proboque,
Deteriora sequor,'¹

to be all that philosophy will amount to. Whereas, those who, upon such occasions, apply themselves to God by earnest prayer, feel a disengagement from such impressions, and themselves endued with a power to resist them, so that those bonds which formerly held them, fall off."

Here, then, is, we conceive, a most striking difference between the merely rationalizing and the spiritual

¹ I know the better way; but, oh! untrue
To what my mind approves, the worse pursue.

Christian : the one is not, the other is, a man of prayer : the former may have some vague notion of insensible aid from heaven, but his distinct hopes are all placed on his own rational and moral endeavors : instead, therefore, of recurring to prayer, he thinks of strengthening his own resolutions ; and sets himself to recollect motives and reasons for right conduct, rather than expects perceptible divine assistances, like that described by Burnet : he, consequently, confines his efforts to outward acts, as he is conscious his power goes very little farther ; and that his thoughts and feelings will, for the most part, take their own course in spite of his attempts to control them. The success of such a course, therefore, can be but slight, at the best ; and he who pursues it, seldom aims at much : he thinks human nature is frail, and God is merciful ; and if a man does his best, no more can be expected from him.

On such persons, it belongs not to us to pronounce any sentence : they are exactly those whom St. Paul describes as not attaining to righteousness, because they seek it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law. But there is no doubt, many conscientious persons may be pursuing this course, through ignorance of any better one. Leaving such, therefore, to God's infinite mercy, we only say, happy is he who so despairs of his own efforts as to expect support and establishment only through means of prayer ; and who, whether he hears, or reads, or converses, looks to his

closet as that ultimate sphere of action, to which all the rest are but subservient. By such a course, as already intimated, and by such alone, he brings himself into the presence of God; and, in that presence, sin appears exceedingly sinful. Outward reformation will not avail there: "If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things." Prayer, therefore, excites tenderness of conscience,—whose language is, "Search me, O God, and prove me; look well if there be any way of wickedness in me." Thus, the depth and variety of the disease being more and more felt, the least degree of effectual aid will be felt also. He prays thus earnestly, because he feels that there is no health in him; and, consequently, when any better feeling springs up in his heart, he is still alive to it. A change of heart is his object; and every tendency to such a change, every symptom of softened spiritualized feelings, is to him more precious than the wealth of worlds. It is in prayer—whether it be in the closet or in the heart—that such emotions are chiefly felt; and the emotions themselves, if genuine, have the character of prayer in them. In fact, the spirit of prayer is the spiritual Christian's element: were this to be extinguished, his mind would be like the animal in the exhausted receiver. A sense of God and of divine things, is that to his soul which animation is to his body; and the habitual devotion of the heart is, in spiritual life, what the action of the lungs is in cor-

poreal life, as Herbert beautifully says,—“God’s breath in man returning to its birth.” Faith, therefore,—that divine and yet most rational faith already described,—acts most radically by prayer; and in this way, chiefly, it generates love, and also strengthens itself. To him who “prays to God always,” divine objects become more and more impressive on the mind and heart,—which is the growth of faith; as well as more and more attractive to the imagination and affections,—which implies advance in love. Prayer, therefore, must be the chief nourishment of that religion which St. Paul makes essentially to consist in faith working by love.

“That method of strengthening faith,” says Addison, “which is more persuasive than any other, is an habitual adoration of the Supreme Being, as well in constant acts of mental worship, as in outward forms. The devout man does not only believe, but feels there is a Deity; he has actual sensations of him; his experience concurs with reason; he sees him, more and more, in all his intercourses with him, and, even in this life, almost loses his faith in conviction.” Is there any comparison, on the whole, between the merely rational and the spiritual Christian? between the cold, superficial, unsuccessful strivings of the one, and the animating, heart-engaging, efficacious devotion of the other? How weak, on the one hand, is that man’s support, how limited his resources, who knows no aid

beyond the natural effect of his own reasonings and his own exertions ! How consolatory *his* views and reflections, who knows from his own experience, that, if he be not wanting to himself, his habitual sense of divine things is always capable of being so quickened, as to make him equal to any trial, superior to any calamity, and that his faithful and earnest prayers for such assistance can never be wholly ineffectual ! He is, on the contrary, accustomed to such happy excitations ; therefore, he goes with filial confidence to the divine mercy-seat, for “ grace to help him,” whether against sin or suffering ; and the results are such as to satisfy him, more and more, that he is actually within the sphere of God’s paternal influences, and a participant of that divine, unextinguishable, beatific life, whose source is hid with Christ in God.

May we not, then, truly say, that he who lives such a life, is master, not only of himself, but of the world ? “ All things are yours,” says St. Paul, “ whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come,—all are yours.” He has human feelings like others, and is equally susceptible of pain and pleasure, but (once more to use the noble language of Addison) “ he reflects upon his weakness and imperfection ; he comforts himself with the contemplation of these divine attributes, which are employed for his safety and welfare. He finds his

want of foresight made up by the omniscience of Him who is his support. He is not sensible of his own want of strength, when he knows that his Helper is almighty. In short, the person who has a firm trust in the Supreme Being, is powerful in his power, wise by his wisdom, happy by his happiness. He reaps the benefit of every divine attribute, and loses his own insufficiency, in the fulness of infinite perfection." We conclude these remarks with a passage with which Saurin begins one of his sermons, and which falls in most appositely with what has been said :—

"It is very important that we should know the reasons which should attach us to religion. It is much, to be capable of deducing, with justness and precision, the arguments which prove virtue preferable to vice. It is much, to be able to go from principle to principle, from consequence to consequence, and to say to oneself, from a full persuasion of the excellence of piety, I judge a good man to be happy. .

"But, however well fitted this path may appear for conducting to the Deity, it is not always sufficient : reasonings may refute the pleas of our passions, but they are not always strong enough to repress their force : powerful as such demonstrations may be, in a book, in the school, or in the study, they prove weak, and their point is blunted, when they are opposed to strong sensations, whether painful or pleasurable. The

reasons which may be urged for suffering on account of religion, lose much, if not of their clearness, at least of their efficacy, when they are offered to a man about to be broken alive on the wheel, or to be roasted on a gridiron. Arguments for resisting the flesh, for rising above sense and matter, too generally vanish, when even the baits of pleasure are presented to our view. How much, then, is he to be pitied, who knows no other method of approaching his God than that of discussion and argumentation ?

“ There is a far more certain path for conducting us to the Supreme Being, and a far more certain method of confirming our communion with him, than that which we too generally have embraced : I mean that of relish and sentiment. Happy is that Christian, who, in his conflicts with the enemies of his salvation, can oppose pleasures to pleasures, delights to delights ; the pleasures of prayer and meditation, to the pleasures of the world,—the delights of silence and retirement, to the delights of gayety, of dissipation, of grandeur : such a man is fixed in what is right by the very bias of his nature. There is only need of the common feelings of human kind, to make a man love the source of his joys. Such a one is attached to religion by the same powerful motives as bind the people of the world to the objects of their passions : the love of pleasure being not less a tie in the one case than in the other. Such a one will never yield wholly to temptation ; because,

according to the expressive language of an apostle, 'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,' guards all the avenues of his heart; that is, it counteracts the seductiveness of temptation, by the far higher delight with which it fills the soul."

Effects of Christianity.

THE influence of religion is not to be sought for in the councils of princes, in the debates or resolutions of popular assemblies, in the conduct of governments toward their subjects or states, or sovereigns toward one another; of conquerors at the head of their armies, or of parties intriguing for power at home; but must be perceived, if perceived at all, in the silent course of private and domestic life. Nay more; even there its influence may not be very obvious to observation. If it check, in some degree, personal dissoluteness, if it beget a general probity in the transaction of business, if it produce soft and humane manners in the mass of the community, and occasional exertions of laborious or expensive benevolence in a few individuals, it is all the effect which can offer itself to external notice. *The kingdom of heaven is within us.* That which is the substance of the religion, its hopes and consolations,

its intermixture with the thoughts by day and by night ; the devotion of the heart, the control of appetite, the steady direction of the will to the commands of God, is necessarily invisible. Yet, upon these depend the virtue and happiness of millions. This cause renders the representations of history, with respect to religion, defective and fallacious in a greater degree than they are upon any other subject. Religion operates most upon those of whom history knows the least ; upon fathers and mothers in their families, upon men-servants and maid-servants, upon the orderly tradesman, the quiet villager, the manufacturer at his loom, the husbandman in his fields. Amongst such, its influence collectively may be of inestimable value, yet its effects in the meantime, little upon those who figure upon the stage of the world. They may know nothing of it ; they may believe nothing of it ; may be actuated by motives more impetuous than those which religion is able to excite. It cannot, therefore, be thought strange, that this influence should elude the grasp and touch of public history : for, what is public history but a register of the successes and disappointments, the vices, the follies and the quarrels of those who engage in contentions for power. Much of this influence may be felt in times of public distress, and little of it in times of public wealth and security. This also increases the uncertainty of any opinions that we draw from historical representations. The influence of Christianity is

commensurate with no effects which history states. We do not pretend that it has any such necessary and irresistible power over the affairs of nations, as to surmount the force of other causes.

I recur to the argument, that the benefit of religion, being chiefly felt in the obscurity of private stations, necessarily escapes the observation of history. From the first general notification of Christianity to the present day, there have been in every age many millions whose names were never heard of, made better by it, not only in their conduct, but in their disposition; and happier, not so much in their external circumstances, as in that which is *inter præcordia*, in that which alone deserves the name of happiness, the tranquillity and consolation of their thoughts. It has been, since its commencement, the author of happiness and virtue to millions and millions of the human race. Who is there that would not wish his son to be a Christian?

The value of Christianity is not to be appreciated by its *temporal* effects. The object of revelation is to influence human conduct in this life; but what is gained to happiness by that influence, can only be estimated by taking in the whole of human existence. Then, there may be also great consequences of Christianity which do not belong to it as a revelation. The effects upon human salvation, of the mission, of the death, of the present, of the future agency of Christ, may be universal, though the religion be not universally known.

Christianity is charged with many consequences for which it is not responsible. Religious motives have had no more to do in the formation of nine-tenths of the intolerant and persecuting laws which in different countries have been established upon the subject of religion, than they have had to do in England with the making of the game laws. These measures, although they have the Christian religion for their subject, are resolvable into a principle which Christianity certainly did not plant, which principle is no other than this, that they who are in possession of power do what they can to keep it. Christianity is answerable for no part of the mischief which has been brought upon the world by persecution, except that which has arisen from *conscientious* persecutors. Now these, perhaps, have never been either numerous or powerful: nor is it to Christianity that even *their* mistake can fairly be imputed. They have been misled by an error not properly Christian or religious, but by an error in their moral philosophy. They pursued the particular, without adverting to the general consequence. Believing certain articles of faith, or a certain mode of worship, to be highly conducive, or perhaps essential to salvation, they thought themselves bound to bring all they could, by every means, into them. And this they thought without considering what would be the effect of such a conclusion, when adopted amongst mankind as a general rule of conduct. Had there been in the New Testament, what

there are in the Koran, precepts authorizing coercion in the propagation of the religion and the use of violence towards unbelievers, the case would have been different. This distinction could not have been taken, nor this defence made.

The differences of opinion, that have in all ages prevailed amongst Christians, fall very much within the alternative which has been stated. If we possessed the disposition which Christianity labors, above all other qualities, to inculcate, these differences would do little harm. If that disposition be wanting, other causes, even were these absent, would continually rise up, to call forth the malevolent passions into action. Differences of opinion, when accompanied with mutual charity, which Christianity forbids them to violate, are for the most part innocent, and for some purposes useful. They promote inquiry, discussion, and knowledge. They help to keep up an attention to religious subjects, and a concern about them, which might be apt to die away in the calm and silence of universal agreement.

Requirements of Christianity.

To me, it seems, the man can neither see deep nor far, who is not sensible of his own misery, sinfulness, and dependence; who doth not perceive that this pres-

ent world is not designed, or adapted, to make rational souls happy ; who would not be glad of getting into a better state ; and who would not be overjoyed to find that the road leading thither was the love of God and man ; the practising every virtue ; the living reasonably, while we are here upon earth ; proportioning our esteem to the value of things ; and so using this world, as not to abuse it ; . . for this is what Christianity requires. It neither enjoins the nastiness of the cynic, nor the insensibility of the stoic. Can there be a higher ambition, than to overcome the world ; or a wiser, than to subdue ourselves ; or a more comfortable doctrine, than the remission of sins ; or a more joyful prospect, than that of having our base nature renewed, and assimilated to the Deity, . . our being made fellow-citizens with angels, and sons of God ?



Religion.

I.

RELIGION is a thing much talked of, but little understood ; much pretended to, but very little practised ; and the reason why it is so ill practised, is, because it is not better understood. Knowledge, therefore, must precede religion, since it is necessary to be wise, in order

to be virtuous. It must be known to whom, and upon what account duty is owing, otherwise it can never be rightly paid. It must therefore be considered, that God is the object of all religion, and that the soul is the subject wherein it exists and resides. From the soul it must proceed, and to God it must be directed, as to that Almighty Being whose power alone could create a rational soul, and whose goodness only could move Him to make it capable of an eternal felicity. This infinite bounty of God has laid a perpetual obligation upon the soul, to a constant love, obedience, and adoration of Him; and to an undoubting assurance, that the same power and goodness which created man, will, if he perseveres in the sincere performance of duty, for ever preserve and protect him. The body, therefore, can have no other share in religion, than by its gestures to represent and discover the bent and inclination of the mind; which representations, also, are but too often false and treacherous, deluding those that behold them, into the opinion of a saint, but truly discovering a notorious hypocrite to God, who sees the vast distance between real intentions and deceptive pretences. People are as much deceived themselves, as they deceive others, who think to use religion as they do their best clothes: only wearing it at church on Sunday, to appear fine and make a show, and, as soon as they come home, again laying it aside carefully, for fear of wearing it out; but religion is good for nothing, that is made of

so slight a stuff as will not endure wearing ; which ought, in truth, to be as constant a covering to the soul, as the skin is to the body ; division being the ruin of both. Nor must it be thought that religion consists only in the bending of the knees, which is a fit posture of humility, but in the fervent and humble adoration of the soul ; nor of the lifting up of the hands and eyes, but in the warmth of the affection. Outward gestures and decent behavior are things very fit and reasonable, being all that the body can pay ; but inward sincerity alone, can render them both acceptable. Much less does religion consist in dismal looks and sour faces ; which only show, that it is very unpalatable to those who make them ; and it seems to me as if they were swallowing something that went grievously against their stomachs. It is likewise to be considered, that the frequency and fervency, not the length of prayers, give it acceptance ; that one petition, from a well disposed mind, rightly addressed to God, is more efficacious than ten sermons carefully heard, and more carefully practised. But hearing being much an easier duty than praying, because it can often change into sleeping, is therefore so much preferred to it by a great many people ; but if, in the end, their profound ignorance will not excuse them, I am sure their stupid obstinacy never will. But, in order to praying rightly, so many virtues are required, that people think, perhaps, it would take up too much time

and pains to acquire them, and that an ill man can never pray well, and to purpose ; for the stream will always partake of the fountain ; and if the mind, which is the fountain of all our addresses to God, be vicious and impure, the prayers which proceed from it must needs be sullied with the same pollution. But, on the contrary, if the mind be once made virtuous, all that proceeds from it will be pleasing and accepted. And as to dejected looks, and a sorrowful countenance, they are nowise graceful in religion, which is so far from being a melancholy thing that it can never appear displeasing, or tiresome, to a mind where wisdom and virtue do not first seem troublesome ; for wisdom, instructing the soul to act reasonably, instructs it, likewise, to serve and obey God readily and cheerfully. And, to a wise man, that which appears reasonable will always appear delightful ; and religion is that very same reason and wisdom, whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace.

II.

Of all conditions in the world the most to be despaired of is the condition of those who are altogether insensible and unconcerned about religion ; and yet they may be, in the meantime, tolerably regular in their outward behavior ; there may be nothing in it to give great offence ; their character may be fair ; they

may pass with the common stream, or they may even be well spoken of; nevertheless, I say that, whilst this insensibility remains upon their minds, their condition is more to be despaired of than that of any other person. The religion of Christ does not in any way apply to them: they do not belong to it; for are they to be saved by performing God's will? God is not in their thoughts; His will is not before their eyes. They may do good things; but it is not from a principle of obedience to God that they do them. There may be many crimes which they are not guilty of: but it is not out of regard to the will of God that they do not commit them. It does not, therefore, appear, what just hopes they can entertain of heaven, upon the score of obedience, which they not only do not perform, but do not attempt to perform. Then, secondly, if they are to hope in Christ for a forgiveness of their imperfections, for acceptance through *Him* of broken and deficient services, the truth is, they have recourse to no such hope; besides, it is not imperfection with which they are charged, but a total absence of principle. A man who never strives to obey, never indeed bears that thought about him, must not talk of the imperfection of his obedience: neither the word nor the idea pertains to him: nor can he speak of broken and deficient services, who, in no true sense of the term, hath ever served God at all. It therefore cannot be seen what rational hopes religion can hold out to insensibility and

unconcernedness to those, who neither obey its rules, nor seek its aid ; neither follow its after rewards, nor sue, in spirit and sincerity, for its pardon. But how, it will be asked, can a man be of regular and reputable morals, with this religious insensibility : in other words, with the want of vital religion in his heart ? I answer, it can be. A general regard to character, knowing that it is an advantageous thing to possess a good character ; or a regard generated by natural and early habit : a disposition to follow the usages of life, which are practised around us, and which constitute decency : calm passions, easy circumstances, orderly companions, may, in a multitude of instances, keep man within rules and bounds, without the operation of any religious principle whatever.

There is likewise another cause, which has a tendency to shut out religion from the mind, and yet hath at the same time a tendency to make men orderly and decent in their conduct : and that cause is *business*. A close attention to business is very apt to exclude all other attentions ; especially those of a spiritual nature, which appear to men of business shadowy and unsubstantial, and to want that present reality and advantage which they have been accustomed to look for, and to find in their temporal concerns : and yet it is undoubtedly true, that attention to business frequently and naturally produces regular manners. Here, therefore, is a case in which decency of behavior shall sub-

sist along with religious insensibility, forasmuch as one cause produces both—an intent application to business.

Decency, order, regularity, industry, application to our calling, are all good things; but then they are accompanied with this great danger, viz., that they may subsist without any religious influence whatever; and that when they do so, their tendency is to settle and confirm men in religious insensibility. For finding things go on very smoothly; finding themselves received and respected without any religious principle, they are kept asleep as to their spiritual concerns, by the very quietness and prosperity of things around them. “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the ways of death.” It is possible to slumber in a fancied security, or rather in an unconsciousness of danger, a blindness to our true situation, a thoughtlessness or stupefaction concerning it, even at the time when we are in the utmost peril of salvation; when we are descending fast toward a state of perdition. It is not the judgment of an erroneous conscience; it is rather a want of conscience, or a conscience which is never exerted; in a word, it is an indifference and insensibility concerning religion, even in the midst of seeming and external decency of behavior, and soothed and lulled by this very circumstance. Now it is not only within the compass of impossibility, but it frequently comes to pass that open, confessed, acknowledged sins, sting the sinner’s con-

science : that the upbraiding of mankind, the cry, the clamor, the indignation, which his wickedness has excited, may at length come home to his own soul ; may compel him to reflect ; may bring him, though by force and violence, to a sense of his guilt, and a knowledge of his situation. Now this sense of sin, by whatever cause it be produced, is better than religious insensibility. The sinner's penitence is more to be trusted to than the seemingly righteous man's security. The one is roused ; is roused from the deep forgetfulness of religion, in which he had hitherto lived. Good fruit, even fruit unto life everlasting, may spring from the motion which is stirred in his heart. The other remains, as to religion, in a state of torpor. The thing wanted as the quickening principle, as the seed and germ of religion in the heart, is compunction, conviction of sin, of danger, of the necessity of flying to the Redeemer, and to His religion in good earnest.

III.

That religion is designed to improve the nature and faculties of man, in order to the right governing of our actions, to the securing the peace and progress, external and internal, of individuals and of communities, and lastly, to the rendering us capable of a more perfect state, entitled the kingdom of God, to which

the present life is probationary—this is a truth, which all who have truth only in view, will receive on its own evidence. If such then be the mean end of religion altogether (the improvement namely of our nature and faculties), it is plain that every part of religion is to be judged by its relation to this main end. And since the Christian scheme is religion in its most perfect and effective form, a revealed religion, and therefore in a special sense proceeding from that Being who made us and knows what we are, of course therefore adapted to the needs and capabilities of human nature, nothing can be part of this holy Faith that is not duly proportioned to this end.

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Religion necessarily, as to its main and proper doctrines, consists of ideas—that is, spiritual truths that can only be spiritually discerned, and to the expression of which words are necessarily inadequate, and must be used by accommodation. Hence the absolute indispensability of a Christian life, with its conflicts and inward experiences, which alone can make a man to answer to an opponent, who charges one doctrine as contradictory to another,—“Yes! it is a contradiction in terms; but nevertheless so it is, and both are true, nay, parts of the same truth.”—But alas! besides other evils there is this,—that the Gospel is preached in fragments, and what the hearer can recollect of the sum total of these is to be his Christian knowledge and be-

lief. This is a grievous error. First, labor to enlighten the hearer as to the essence of the Christian dispensation, the grounding and pervading idea, and then set it forth in its manifold perspective, its various stages and modes of manifestation.

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The Christian religion is a religion of ideas, spiritual truths, or truth-powers,—not of notions and conceptions, the manufacture of the understanding,—is therefore *simplex et nuda*, that is, immediate ; like the clear blue heaven, deep and transparent, an ocean unfathomable in its depth, and yet ground all the way. Still, as meditation soars upward, it meets the arched firmament with all its suspended lamps of light. The truth in Christ, like the peace of Christ, passeth all understanding. If ever there was a mischievous use of words, the confusion of the terms, “reason” and “understanding,” “ideas” and “notions” or “conceptions” is most mischievous ; a Surinam toad with a swarm of toadlings sprouting out of its back and sides.

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Religion must have a moral origin, so far at least that the evidence of its doctrines cannot, like the truths of abstract science, be wholly independent of the will : it is designed to improve the nature and faculties of man, and every part of it is to be judged by its relation to this main end.

Revealed truths are to be judged of by us, as far as

they are grounds of practice, or in some way connected with our moral and spiritual interests—the life, the substance, the hope, the love, in one word, the faith are derivatives from the practical, moral and spiritual nature and being of man.

IV.

Religion is proportioned to minds of every description. The generality of men look only at its outward condition and establishment. And our religion is such, that its very establishment is a sufficient evidence of its truth. Others trace it up to the apostles; the more learned go back to the beginning of the world. The angels see it better and higher still, for they see it in God himself.

Those to whom God has given an inward sense of religion in their hearts are truly happy, and thoroughly convinced. But as for those who have not this, we have no way of procuring it for them but by reasoning; waiting till God shall imprint himself on their hearts; without which their faith is not profitable to salvation.

V.

Religion debars not from the lawful delights which are taken in natural things, but teaches the moderate and regular use of them, which is far the sweeter; for

things lawful in themselves are in their excess sinful, and so prove bitterness in the end. And if in some cases it requires the forsaking of lawful enjoyments, as of pleasure, or profits, or honors, for God and for His glory, it is generous and more truly delightful to deny them for this reason, than to enjoy them. Men have done much in this way for the love of their country, and by a principle of moral virtue; but to lose any delight or to suffer any hardship for that highest end, the glory of God, and by the strength of love to Him, is far more excellent and truly pleasant.

The delights and pleasures of sin, religion indeed banishes, but it is to change them for this joy that is unspeakable beyond them. It calls men from sordid and base delights to those that are pure delights indeed: it calls to men, Drink ye no longer of the puddle; here are the crystal streams of a living fountain. There is a delight in the very despising of impure delights; as St. Augustine exclaims, "*Quàm suave est istis suavitatibus carere!*" How pleasant it is to want these pleasures! But for such a change, to have in their stead such delights, as that in comparison the other deserve not the name; to have such spiritual joy as shall end in eternal joy; it is a wonder we hasten not all to choose this joy, but it is indeed because we believe it not.

VI.

True religion, or a heart right toward God and man, implies happiness, as well as holiness ; for it is not only righteousness, but also peace and joy in the Holy Ghost : the peace which God only can give and the world cannot take away ; the peace which passeth all understanding, all rational conception ; being a “supernatural sensation, a divine taste, of the powers of the world to come,” such as the natural man knoweth not, how wise soever in the things of this world he may be.

VII.

Religion has always the same beneficial influence on the mind. In youth, in health, and prosperity, it awakens feelings of gratitude and sublime love ; and purifies, at the same time that it exalts : but it is in misfortune, in sickness, in age, that its effects are most truly and beneficially felt ; when submission in faith, and humble trust in the divine will, from duties become pleasures, undecaying sources of consolation ; then, it creates powers which were believed to have been extinct, and gives a freshness to the mind which was supposed to have passed away for ever ; but which is now renovated as an immortal hope ; then, it is the Pharos, guiding the wave-tossed mariner to his home, as the calm and beautiful basins or fords, surrounded by tranquil

meadows and groves, to the Norwegian pilot, escaping from a heavy storm in the North Sea, or as the green and dewy spot gushing with fountains, to the exhausted and thirsty traveller, in the midst of the desert. Its influence outlives all earthly enjoyments, and becomes stronger as the organs decay, and the frame dissolves ; it appears as that evening star of light in the horizon of life, which, we are sure, is to become, in another season, a morning star ; and it throws its radiance through the gloom and shadow of death !

Seriousness necessary to Religion.

THE first requisite in religion is seriousness. No impression can be made without it. An orderly life, so far as others are able to observe us, is now and then produced by prudential motives, or by dint of habit ; but without seriousness, there can be no religious principle at the bottom, no course of conduct flowing from religious motives—in a word, there can be no religion. This cannot exist without seriousness upon the subject. Perhaps a teacher of religion has more difficulty in producing seriousness amongst his hearers, than in any other part of his office. Until he succeeds in this, he loses his labor : and when once, from any cause what-

ever, a spirit of levity has taken hold of a mind, it is next to impossible to plant serious considerations in that mind. It is seldom to be done, except by some great shock or alarm, sufficient to make a radical change in the disposition, and which is God's own way of bringing about the business.

There is no hope at all of a man who does not find himself serious in religious matters, serious at heart. If the judgment of Almighty God at the last day, if the difference between being saved and being lost, being accepted in the beloved, and being cast forth into outer darkness, being bid by a tremendous word either to enter into the joys of our Father, or to go into the fire prepared for the devil and his angels, for all who have served him and not God—if these things do not make us serious, then it is most certain, either that we do not believe them, or that we have not yet thought of them at all, or that we have positively broken off thinking of them, have turned away from the subject, have refused to let it enter, have shut our minds against it, or lastly, that such a levity of mind is our character, as nothing whatever can make any serious impression upon. In any of these cases our condition is deplorable; we cannot look for salvation from Christ's religion under any of these.

Religious seriousness is not churlishness, is not severity, is not gloominess, is not melancholy; but is nevertheless a disposition of mind, and, like every dis-

position, it will show itself one way or other. It will, in the first place, neither invite, nor entertain, nor encourage, anything which has a tendency to turn religion into ridicule. It is not in the nature of things, that a serious mind should find delight or amusement in so doing ; it is not in the nature of things, that it should not feel an inward pain and reluctance, whenever it is done. Therefore, if we are capable of being pleased with hearing religion treated or talked of with levity, made, in any manner whatever, an object of sport and jesting ; if we are capable of making it so ourselves, or joining with others, as in a diversion, in so doing ; nay, if we do not feel ourselves at the heart grieved and offended whenever it is our lot to be present at such sort of conversation and discourse, then is the inference, as to ourselves, infallible, that we are not yet serious in our religion ; and then it will be for us to remember that seriousness is one of those marks by which we may fairly judge of the state of our mind and disposition as to religion ; and that the state of our mind and disposition is the very thing to be consulted, to be known, to be examined and searched into, for the purpose of ascertaining whether we are in a right or safe way or not. Words and actions are to be judged of with a reference to that disposition which they indicate. There may be language, there may be expressions, there may be behavior, of no very great consequence in itself, but of very great consequence in-

deed, when considered as indicating a disposition and state of mind. If it show, with respect to religion, *that* to be wanting within which ought to be there, namely, a deep and fixed sense of our personal and individual concern in religion, of its importance above all other important things, then it shows that there is yet a deficiency in our hearts which, without delay, must be supplied by closer meditation upon the subject than we have hitherto used; and above all by earnest and unceasing prayer for such a portion and measure of spiritual influence shed upon our hearts, as may cure and remedy that heedlessness, and coldness, and deadness, and unconcern, which are fatal, and under which we have so much reason to know that we as yet unhappily labor.

The Effects of Religion.

It teacheth and tutors the soul to a high reverence and veneration of Almighty God; a sincere and upright walking, as in the presence of the invisible, all-seeing God: it makes a man truly to love, to honor, to obey him; and, therefore, careful to know what his will is: it renders the heart highly thankful to him; both as Creator, Redeemer, and Benefactor: it makes a man entirely to depend on him; to look to him for guidance,

and direction, and protection; to submit to his will with all patience and resignation of soul: it gives the law, not only to his words and actions, but to his very thoughts and purposes; so that he dares not entertain a very thought, unbecoming the sight and presence of that God to whom all our thoughts are legible: it teacheth and bringeth a man to such a deportment, both of external and internal sobriety, as may be decent in the presence of God and all his holy angels: it crusheth and casts down all pride and haughtiness, both in a man's heart and carriage; and gives him an humble frame of soul and life, in the sight both of God and men: it regulates and governs the passions of the mind, and brings them into due moderation and frame: it gives a man a right estimate of this present world, and sets his heart and hopes above it; so that he never loves it more than it deserves: it makes the wealth and glory of this world, high places and great preferments, but of a low and little value to him; so that he is neither covetous, nor ambitious, nor over-solicitous for the advantages of it: it brings a man to that frame, that righteousness, justice, honesty, and fidelity are, as it were, parts of his nature; he can sooner die than commit, or purpose, that which is unjust, dishonest, or unworthy of a good man: it makes him value the love of God, and peace of conscience, above all the wealth and honor of the world, and be very vigilant to keep it inviolably: though he be under a due apprehension of

the love of God to him, yet it keeps him humble and watchful, and free from all presumption; so that he dares not, under a vain confidence of the indulgence, and mercy, and favor of God, turn aside, to commit or purpose, even the least injury to man: he performs all his duties to God in sincerity, integrity, and constancy: and, while he lives on earth, yet his conversation, his hopes, his treasure, and the flower of his expectation, are in heaven; and he entirely endeavors to live suitably to such a hope: in sum, it restores the image of God unto the soul, in righteousness and true holiness.

Tests of True Religion.

It is probable our hearts are right with God, and our intentions innocent and pious, if we set upon actions of religion or civil life with an affection proportionate to the quality of the work; that we act our temporal affairs with a desire no greater than our necessity; and that, in actions of religion, we be zealous, active, and operative, so far as prudence will permit; but, in all cases, that we value a religious design before a temporal, when otherwise they are in equal order to their several ends; that is, that whatsoever is necessary in order to our soul's health be higher esteemed than what is for

bodily ; and the necessities, the indispensable necessities of the spirit, be served before the needs of nature, when they are required in their several circumstances ; or plainer yet, when we choose any temporal inconvenience rather than commit a sin, and when we choose to do a duty rather than to get gain. But he that does his recreation or his merchandise cheerfully, promptly, readily, and busily, and the works of religion slowly, flatly, and without appetite, and the spirit moves like Pharaoh's chariots when the wheels were off ; it is a sign that his heart is not right with God, but it cleaves too much to the world.

It is likely our hearts are pure and our intentions spotless, when we are not solicitous of the opinion and censures of men ; but only that we do our duty, and be accepted of God. For our eyes will certainly be fixed there from whence we expect our reward : and if we desire that God should approve us, it is a sign we do his work, and expect him our paymaster.

He that does as well in private, between God and his own soul, as in public, hath given himself a good testimony that his purposes are full of honesty, nobleness and integrity. For what Helkanah said to the mother of Samuel, "Am I not better to thee than ten sons ?" is most certainly verified concerning God ; that he, who is to be our judge, is better than ten thousand witnesses. But he that would have his virtues published, studies, not virtue, but glory. "He is not just that

will not be just without praise: but he is a righteous man that does justice, when to do so is made infamous; and he is a wise man who is delighted with an ill name that is well gotten." And indeed that man has a strange covetousness, or folly, that is not contented with this reward, that he hath pleased God. And see what he gets by it. He that does good works for praise or secular ends, sells an inestimable jewel for a trifle; and that which would purchase heaven for him he parts with for the breath of the people, which at best is but air, and that not often wholesome.

It is well also, when we are not solicitous or troubled concerning the effect and event of all our actions; but that being first by prayer recommended to him is left at his dispose: for then, in case the event be not answerable to our desires, or to the efficacy of the instrument, we have nothing left to rest in but the honesty of our purposes; which it is the more likely we have secured, by how much more we are indifferent concerning the success. St. James converted but eight persons, when he preached in Spain; and our blessed Saviour converted fewer than his own disciples did: and if thy labors prove unprosperous, if thou beest much troubled at that, it is certain thou didst not think thyself secure of a reward for thine intention, which thou mightest have done, if it had been pure and just.

He loves virtue for God's sake and its own that

loves and honors it wherever it is to be seen ; but he that is envious or angry at a virtue that is not his own, at the perfection or excellency of his neighbor, is not covetous of the virtue, but of its reward and reputation ; and then his intentions are polluted. It was a great ingenuity in Moses that wished all the people might be prophets ; but if he had designed his own honor, he would have prophesied alone. But he that desires only that the work of God and religion shall go on, is pleased with it, whosoever is the instrument.

He that despises the world, and all its appendant vanities, is the best judge, and the most secured of his intentions ; because he is the furthest removed from a temptation. Every degree of mortification is a testimony of the purity of our purpose ; and in what degree we despise sensual pleasure, or secular honors, or worldly reputation, in the same degree we shall conclude our heart right to religion and spiritual designs.

Happiness.

I.

IF happiness be necessary to man, religion is necessary in order to attain happiness. For religion is, properly, nothing else than a right guided pursuit after

happiness. We must not imagine, when we perform any duty toward God, or put up our addresses to him, that we literally do him either honor or service; but that we are doing the most reasonable thing in the world, and the most beneficial to ourselves, by which we aspire after, and acquire effectually, our greatest felicity, from the bountiful acceptance of our performances by God, to whom they are utterly unprofitable, and to whose complete and perfect sufficiency and bliss all the united beings of the creation would not be able to make the most inconsiderable addition. We must, therefore, by no means entertain such absurd notions as to fancy that, in our religious duties, we are doing service to God, when we are actually doing the greatest imaginable honor and service to ourselves; whilst he is pleased to permit us to enter into any communication with him, upon which he shall vouchsafe, through his own pure bounty, to confer his favor. And, indeed, our performing any duty to God as we ought, as well as the means of procuring and increasing it, is the consequence of his favor; since it is by his favor only, that we are induced and enabled to make any right applications to him.

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Upon whatsoever foundation happiness is built, when that foundation fails, happiness must be destroyed. It is wisdom, therefore, to choose such a foundation for it, as is not liable to destructive accidents. If happiness

be founded upon riches, it lies at the mercy of theft, deceit, oppression, war, and tyranny; if upon fine houses and costly furniture, one spark of fire is able to consume it; if upon wife, children, friends, health, or life, a thousand diseases, and ten thousand fatal accidents, have power to destroy it. But, if it be founded upon the infinite bounty and goodness of God, and upon those virtues that entitle to his favor, its foundation is immovable, and its duration eternal.

II.

He is happy that carries about with him, in the world, the temper of the cloister, and preserves the fear of doing ill, while he suffers himself to be impelled by the zeal of doing good; who uses the comforts and the conveniences of his condition, as though he used them not; with that constant desire of a better state, which sinks the value of earthly things; who can be rich, or poor, without pride in riches, or discontent in poverty; who can pass undefiled through a polluted world, and, among all the vicissitudes of good and evil, have his heart fixed only where true joys are to be found.

III.

All lower natures find their highest good in semblances and seekings of that which is higher and better.

All things strive to ascend, and ascend in their striving. And shall man alone stoop? Shall his pursuits and desires, the reflections of his inward life, be like the reflected image of a tree on the edge of a pool, that grows downward, and seeks a mock heaven in the unstable element beneath it, in neighborhood with the slime, water-weeds and oozy bottom-grass that are yet better than itself and more noble, in as far as substances that appear as shadows are preferable to shadows mistaken for substance? No! it must be a higher good to make you happy. While you labor for anything below your proper humanity, you seek a happy life in the region of death. Well saith the poet—

“Unless above himself he can
Erect himself, how mean a thing is man!”

IV.

Bishop Butler defines happiness to consist in “a faculty having its proper object.” “Pleasure,” says Sir William Hamilton, “is the reflex of unimpeded energy.” The two expressions explain and agree with each other: the latter, indeed, embraces the former. We doubt not they are substantially true, and would enable us to classify every degree and order of happiness from the highest to the lowest; it always remaining true that, however base or diluted might be the joy of activity, and though relatively even painful, it

might yet be named pleasure, in contrast with the state of compulsory inactivity : the pleasure of revenge is poor and contemptible, yet it is a joy compared with its unsatisfied gnawing. And whatever might be the lowest and feeblest form of joy, it cannot admit of question what would be the highest. It would assuredly be the activity of love. We have no sooner uttered the word than we are at the gate of the Christian heaven. When the heart begins to go out in love to God, heaven has commenced within it, and the certitude of an eternal heaven is found in this, that it is toward an infinite God it goes out. Provision is thus made at once for endless activity and endless love. There has been much written in our day about the worship of sorrow, and a great truth lies under the words ; this truth, freed of its encumbering falsehood, Christianity embraces ; it speaks of tribulation as that through which we enter into the kingdom of heaven, and gives sorrow the high office of breaking the soul to humility and contriteness, that it may kneel at the feet of Jesus. But, if there is any one instinctive utterance of the human soul to which we could accord consent, it is the declaration that sorrow, whatever it may subserve, is a blot upon God's universe, is the fang of the snake sin, is the shadow cast by the wings of the great dragon that has come up from the bottomless pit to prey on man ; and that, if well interpreted, the worship of joy is higher than the worship of sor-

row. But how completely is all that insinuation, about Christianity being allied to a selfish theory of morals, now seen to vanish! The Christian does not serve God for happiness, but God by a sublime necessity has attached happiness to his service. Along the ranks of his army goes the command to rejoice; above it floats the banner of love. Felicity is the light which rests over it all. From the helmets of the seraphim that light is flashed back in full unclouded blaze; on us of the human race, as Isaac Taylor says beautifully, who "seem to stand almost on the extreme confines of happiness," its first rays are even now descending. Happiness is the spherulic music in which a God, whose name is Love, has ordained that holiness must voice itself; his light, as it sweeps over the Æolian harp of immensity, kindling every dead world into beauty, breaks forth in the Memnonian anthem of joy.

Inquiry after Happiness.

I.

If we seriously consider what religion is, we shall find the saying of the wise King Solomon to be unexceptionably true. *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

Doth religion require anything of us more than that

we live *soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world?* Now what can be more pleasant or peaceable than these? Temperance is always at leisure, luxury always in a hurry; the latter weakens the body and pollutes the soul; the former is the sanctity, purity, and sound state of both. It is one of Epicurus's fixed maxims, "That life can never be pleasant without virtue." Hence you cannot become more virtuous but you will become happier: and you cannot become more vicious without an increase of misery.

The pleasure that accompanies or depends on a healthy and vigorous body will be the consequence and reward of a temperate life and habits of active industry, whether this pleasure were or were not the chief or only determining motive thereto. Virtue may possibly add to the pleasure a good of another kind; a higher good, perhaps, than the worldly mind is capable of understanding, a spiritual complacency, of which in your present sensualized state you can form no idea. It may add to, but it cannot detract from it. Thus the reflected rays of the sun that give light, distinction, and endless multiformity to the mind, give at the same time the pleasurable sensation of warmth to the body.

Few men are so utterly reprobate, so imbruted by their vices, as not to have some lucid, or at least quiet and sober intervals; and in such a moment, *dum deserviunt iræ*, few can stand up unshaken against the ap-

peal to their own experience.—What have been the wages of sin? What has the devil done for you? What sort of master have you found him? Then let us in befitting detail, and by a series of questions that ask so loud, and are secure against any false answer, urge home the proof of the position, that to be vicious is to be wretched; adding the fearful corollary, that if even in the body, which as long as life is in it can never be wholly bereaved of pleasurable sensations, vice is found to be misery, what must it not be in the world to come? There, where even the crime is no longer possible, much less the gratifications that once attended it; where nothing of vice remains but its guilt and its misery, vice must be misery itself—all and utter misery. So best may the motives of prudence be held forth, and the impulses of self-love be awakened, in alliance with truth, and free from the danger of confounding things—(the laws of duty, I mean, and the maxims of interest)—which it deeply concerns us to keep distinct; inasmuch as this distinction and the faith therein are essential to our moral nature, and this again the ground-work and pre-condition of the spiritual state, in which the humanity strives after godliness, and in the name and power, and through the prevenient and assisting grace, of the Mediator, will not strive in vain.

The advantages of a life passed in conformity with the precepts of virtue and religion, and in how many

and various respects they recommend virtue and religion, even on grounds of prudence, form a delightful subject of meditation, and a source of refreshing thought to good and pious men. Nor is it strange if, transported with the view, such persons should sometimes discourse on the charm of forms and colors to men whose eyes are not yet couched; or that they occasionally seem to invert the relations of cause and effect, and forget that there are acts and determinations of the will and affections, the consequences of which may be plainly foreseen, and yet cannot be made our proper and primary motives for such acts and determinations, without destroying or entirely altering the distinct nature and character of the latter.

Art thou under the tyranny of sin—a slave to vicious habits—at enmity with God, and a skulking fugitive from thine own conscience? O, how idle the dispute, whether the listening to the dictates of prudence from prudential and self-interested motives be virtue or merit, when the not listening is guilt, misery, madness, and despair! The best, the most Christian-like pity thou canst show, is to take pity on thy own soul. The best and most acceptable service thou canst render, is to do justice and show mercy to thyself.

II.

With respect to any final aim or end, the greater part of mankind live at hazard. They have no certain harbor in view, nor direct their course by any fixed star. But to him that knoweth not the port to which he is bound, no wind can be favorable ; neither can he, who has not yet determined at what mark he is to shoot, direct his arrow aright.

It is not, however, the less true that there is a proper object to aim at ; and if this object be meant by the term happiness, I assert that there is such a thing as human happiness, a *summum bonum*, or ultimate good. What this is, the Bible alone shows clearly and certainly, and points out the way that leads to the attainment of it. This is that which prevailed with St. Augustine to study the Scriptures, and engaged his affection to them. “In Cicero, and Plato, and other such writers,” says he, “I meet with many things acutely said, and things that excite a warmth of emotion ; but in none of them do I find these words, *Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*”

It is one main point of happiness, that he that is happy doth know and judge himself to be so. This being the peculiar good of a reasonable creature, it is to be enjoyed in a reasonable way. It is not as the dull resting of a stone or any other natural body in its

natural place ; but the knowledge and consideration of it is the fruition of it, the very relishing and tasting of its sweetness.

Search after Happiness.

MAN is the only creature in the world whose happiness is imperfect, and who is sensible that it is so ; who has something in him that disdains the imperfection of his own being, and languishes after a condition more perfect. Were he, like other animals, composed only of flesh and blood, he would find no more faults with his being, than they do with theirs ; since the matter of which his body and theirs is made, is not capable of such reflections. But these are secret repinings of the soul, by which she plainly discovers herself ; and our attentive observations of her will soon turn into demonstrations that we have such a principle existent in us. And, since it is natural for all beings to seek and thirst after happiness, it is necessary to know where the seat of happiness is fixed. It is the want of this knowledge, which makes us waste so much time in vain pursuits, and unprofitable attempts ; endeavoring to confine happiness to the body, which is a prison too weak to hold it. The senses which conduct it thither, are too feeble long to guard and detain it : it

is always attempting to make its escape ; and what is worse, it never misses its aim. Besides, if it has no other existence than the body, it must be very short-lived, and, in a contemptible portion of time, must perish with the body. A man that is of this opinion, must be sure to keep his thoughts always steadily confined within the compass of this life and world. For, if they happen to wander beyond it, they will enter into dark uncomfortable regions, that will afford them nothing but black and dismal prospects ; which too many unthinking people find by sad experience. Now, virtue, which may be defined as the science of happiness, will give us true notions of happiness, and teach us, that its true seat is in the soul. This is of a capacity large enough to contain it, and of a duration lasting enough to preserve it to eternity ; there it may rise to immeasurable heights, without restraint ; it can never overburthen or overpower the immortal spirit. It is the poor feeble body only that is not able to support it ; too weak to bear the rapid and violent motions of the soul, when filled and agitated with an excessive joy. The heart is capable of supporting but a small insignificant measure of enjoyment ; it may easily be overcharged with it, like a gun with powder, and be rent and destroyed with its irresistible efforts ; according to the several degrees of which, it often occasions ecstasies, swoonings, and death. The heart can no more sustain immoderate joy, than immoderate grief ; the one is

destructive by too much dilation, the other by too great a depression ; and it is equal, whether the vessel be crushed by too strong a pressure, or torn in pieces by too violent an extension from within ; whichsoever of them happens, the frail cask is broken, and life spilt.

Impediments to Happiness.

GRIEF and discontent have generally their foundation in desire ; so that, whosoever can obtain the sovereignty over his desire, will be master of his happiness. On the other hand, all such desires as occasion grief and discontent, are founded upon weakness or ignorance ; therefore, we must gain possession of the contrary qualities, which are wisdom and constancy, before we can reasonably hope to be masters of our desires. The two chief heads, to which all human griefs and discontents may be reduced, bodily pains and indispositions excepted, are these : either we desire to have what we cannot possess, or else we desire to be freed from what we cannot get rid of. And it appears plainly, that both these sorts of desires are founded upon weakness and ignorance ; being founded upon impossibilities, which it must be either weakness or ignorance to languish after. For, if the things which we desire are in our power, there is no cause of grief ;

and if they are not, it is vain and unreasonable to grieve. Sometimes, indeed, we make ourselves miserable, by desiring things possible ; but then, they are such as are hurtful and inconvenient : so that, in this case, though our desires are grounded upon possibility, they are yet grounded upon inconsistency, which is altogether as bad ; since the gratification of such desires is incompatible with our happiness. Thus, generally, our discontents are owing to our folly and impiety : to our folly, because they are vain and fruitless ; and to our impiety, because we cannot, as we ought, submit to the divine will, and cheerfully acquiesce in the divine determinations,—a manifest proof, either that we think ourselves wise enough to contrive our own happiness, or that we mistrust the infinite bounty of God, lest it should fall short in the distribution of it to us. As to grief for the loss of friends, which still proceeds from impossible desire, it must necessarily flow from one of these two causes : either that we think their death a diminution of our happiness, or of theirs ; or else that we grieve we know not why, and, consequently, that our grief is unreasonable. If the diminution of our own enjoyment cause our lamentation, we are moved by interest and self-love, not by the love of our friend. On the other hand, if the diminution of our friend's enjoyment be the occasion of it, we must have an ill opinion of his condition. But, if our felicity depends either upon friends, or anything else in this

world, it is very uncertain; and if we conceive that the felicity of our friends is entirely dependent upon the present union of soul and body, our faith is as doubtful as our happiness. O good God, how many degrees of doubt wilt thou allow to enter into the composition of saving faith, if uncompounded faith be too sublime for human nature! If ten degrees of doubt for one of faith will not be accepted, I fear the number of those who are saved by faith is very small. O great God, increase my faith! Increase the faith of all mankind that have it, and bestow it upon those who want it, out of thy infinite compassion. And let the defects of our faith be supplied by thy mercy, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Happiness of the Righteous.

THE state of a righteous and holy soul cannot be other than a happy and blessed one; the belief and confident expectation of heaven must needs be more transporting and ravishing than the richest fancy of a sinner; and that security, both in respect of this and a future life, which a good man enjoys in the protection of God and the assurance of his favor, must infinitely exceed anything that a sinner can attain to, and must exclude those uneasy fears which do frequently inter-

rupt the sinner's enjoyment, and overcast his hopes. He that loves God and virtue, cannot but be happy in the daily practice and enjoyment of what he most delights in. And he, lastly, that hath subdued his passions, and overcome the world, cannot choose but reap the daily fruits of so glorious a conquest, and be constantly entertained with pleasing reflections and delightful prospects ; and yet, if he should enjoy nothing else, that sovereignty, liberty, magnanimity, and divine charity, and enlargement of soul, which he thereby gains, were an abundant reward of this victory. The sum of all is this : a good man has the best title to the blessings of this life, and the glories of another ; he enjoys this world with as great security as wisdom and moderation, and has an assured hope of a far better when he quits this ; the anticipations of which by faith, love, and hope, do at once facilitate and confirm his conquest over all unworthy lusts, and entertain him with inexpressible satisfaction and pleasure.

It is a Sin not to be Happy.

IT would seem strange, were it said, that it is a sin not to be happy. But yet, when narrowly examined,

it will appear no more strange than true. For the effect must needs partake of the cause, and misery must therefore be undoubtedly sinful, because it is acknowledged to be the offspring of sin. But there are two sorts of miseries incident to mankind: the one not to be avoided, and therefore to be pitied; the other to be remedied, and therefore inexcusable. The former sort are such as are occasioned by bodily indispositions; the latter are the diseases of a vicious mind. To the miseries of a distempered body, we are enslaved by nature; to those of a distempered mind we voluntarily submit. In the former case, we want power to break our chain; in the latter, we want will to obtain our freedom. It cannot be denied, that it is a sin to be miserable through the vice of the mind; since it is apparent that those miseries generally proceed either from desiring things vicious or impossible, or from dreading things natural or unavoidable; in all which cases we are guilty of disobeying or repining at the will of God, to which we ought cheerfully, and in all humility, to submit: for, by desiring things vicious, we discover our disobedience; by desiring things impossible, we demonstrate our impiety; and, by dreading things natural and unavoidable, we betray our infidelity. Thus, it being proved that it is a sin to be miserable, it will follow by undeniable consequence that it is a sin not to be happy. It is evident that true happiness consists in

such a peaceful tranquillity and contentment of mind as is neither to be ruffled by fear, nor discomposed by desire. And it is certain that such a blessed temper can never be obtained without faith, love, obedience, and submission, in their several relations to God, and all of them to a great perfection. Now, happiness resulting from the union of these virtues, and the want of any one of them being sinful, it must be granted that it is a sin not to be happy.

Duty and Happiness.

DUTY and happiness are so closely linked together, that the performance of the one naturally draws the other after it. For, as it is our duty gratefully to adore the great God for all his blessings, and contentedly to submit to all his dispensations, so it is a pleasure to be grateful and contented ; but he that is discontented can never be grateful ; nor he that is contented, miserable. Blessed be God, who has annexed an unspeakable pleasure to faith and virtue ; who has, in his infinite goodness, made those things that are of the highest advantage to mankind so exceedingly delightful !

Piety not Gloomy.

I.

THERE exists a prejudice against religious seriousness, arising from a notion very commonly entertained, viz., that religion leads to gloom and melancholy. This notion is a mistake. Some persons are constitutionally subject to melancholy, which is as much a disease in them, as the ague is a disease ; and it may happen that such men's melancholy shall fall upon religious ideas, as it may upon any other subject which seizes their distempered imagination. But this is not religion leading to melancholy. Or it sometimes is the case that men are brought to a sense of religion by calamity and affliction, which produce at the same time depression of spirits. But neither here is religion the cause of that distress or dejection, or to be blamed for it. These cases being excepted, the very reverse of what is alleged against religion is the truth. No man's spirits were ever hurt by doing his duty. On the contrary, one good action, one temptation resisted and overcome, one sacrifice of desire or interest purely for conscience' sake, will prove a cordial for weak and low spirits beyond what either indulgence or diversion or company can do for them. And a succession and course of such actions and self-denials, springing from a religious

principle and manfully maintained, is the best possible course that can be followed as a remedy for sinkings and oppressions of this kind. Can it then be true that religion leads to melancholy? Occasions arise to every man living; to many, very severe as well as repeated occasions, in which the hopes of religion are the only stay that is left them. Godly men have that within them which cheers and comforts them in their saddest hours; ungodly men have that which strikes their heart, like a dagger, in its gayest moments. Godly men discover, what is very true, but what, by most men, is found too late, namely that a good conscience, and the hope of our Creator's final favor and acceptance, are the only solid happiness to be attained in this world. Experience corresponds with the reason of the thing. Religious men are generally cheerful. If this be not observed, as might be expected, supposing it to be true, it is because the cheerfulness which religion inspires does not show itself in noise, or in fits and starts of merriment, but is calm and constant. Of this, the only true and valuable kind of cheerfulness, for all other kinds are hollow and unsatisfying, religious men possess not less, but a greater share than others.

II.

Baxter, speaking of Joseph Alleine, has these remarkable words: "It is his highest excellency, in my

eyes, that he attained to a right temperament of the Christian religion, suitable to the glorious hopes of faith, and to the wonderful love of the Redeemer." And when most Christians think they have done much, if they can weep and groan over their corruptions, and can abstain from the lustful pollutions of the world in the midst of many doubts and fears—love and joy, and a heavenly mind, were the internal parts of his religion; and the large and fervent praises of God, and thanksgiving for his mercy, especially for Christ, and the Spirit, and heaven, were the external exercises of it. He was no despiser of a broken heart; but he had obtained the blessing of a healed, joyful heart. And, oh! how amiable it is to hear the tongue employed, seriously and frequently, in that which it was made for, and to see a man passing with joyful hopes toward immortality! Oh! did Christians, yea, ministers, but live with the joy and gratitude and praise of Jehovah, which beseemeth those that believe what *they* believe, and those that are entering into the celestial choir—they would then be an honor to God and their Redeemer, and would win the world to a love of faith and holiness, and make them throw away their worldly fool-games, and come and see what it is these joyful souls have found. But, when we show the world no religion but sighing and complaining, and live a sadder life than they, and yet talk of the glad tidings of Christ, and pardon, and salvation, we may

talk so long enough before they will believe us, that seem no more to be believers ourselves, or before they will leave their fleshly pleasure for so sad and dreadful a life as this.

Piety the Sum of Happiness.

Two things are essential to sanctification—pains and pleasures. St. Paul informs us that it is “through much tribulation, and afflictions without number, we must enter into the kingdom of God.” Now this ought to comfort those who feel these afflictions, because, being forewarned that the path to the heaven they seek is full of them, they ought to rejoice at finding so many marks of their being in the true way. But these pains are not without their pleasures, by which alone they can be surmounted. For as those who forsake God to return to the world, only do it because they find more enjoyment in the pleasures of the world than in those of union to God; and because this victorious charm draws them aside, making them repent of their first choice, and rendering them, as Tertulian speaks, the devil’s penitents; so men would never abandon the pleasures of the world, to embrace the cross of Jesus Christ, did they not feel more real delight walking in “the narrow” way, than in all the

pleasures of sin. And therefore, as Tertullian also observes, "We are not to suppose the Christian life is a life of sadness. We never quit one pleasure but for the sake of a greater." "Pray without ceasing," says St. Paul, "in everything give thanks, rejoice evermore." It is the joy of finding God which is the spring of our sorrow for having offended Him, and of the whole change of our life. He that has found a treasure hid in a field, according to the parable of our Lord, is so transported as to go "and sell all that he has, and buy that field." Worldly men have their sorrows, but they have not that joy which Jesus Christ said the world can neither give nor take away. The blessed in heaven possess this joy without any mixture of sorrow. And Christians have this joy mingled with sorrow, for having followed other pleasures, and for fear of losing it by these other pleasures, which are tempting them without ceasing. We should therefore unremittingly endeavor to preserve this fear, which both preserves and moderates our joy; and when we find ourselves carried too far toward the one, we ought to incline ourselves toward the other, that we may keep ourselves upright. "Remember your comforts in the day of affliction, and your afflictions in the days of rejoicing," says the Scripture, till the promise which our Lord has given us of making His joy perfect in us be fulfilled. Let us not, therefore, suffer ourselves to be beaten down by affliction, nor imagine that piety

consists only in bitterness without consolation. True piety, which only receives its completion in heaven, is nevertheless so replete with consolations, that they fill its beginning, its progress, and its crown. It is a light so resplendent, that it brightens everything which belongs to it. If some grief be intermixed with it, especially at its commencement, this proceeds from ourselves, and not from virtue ; for it is not the effect of that piety which has been begun in us, but of that impiety which still remains. Root out impiety, and your joy will be unalloyed. Let us not therefore ascribe this sadness to devotion, but to ourselves ; and let us only expect relief in our sanctification.

PART II.

“The great end of religion, is to draw the heart of man from the love of sin, and of this lower world, to the love of God and of holiness ; to a superiority over present allurements ; and to a temper and taste fitted for the enjoyment of a better state.”—ALEXANDER KNOX.

PART II.

Folly of Deferring Religion.

IT is a preposterous resolution that some people take, of deferring to be virtuous till they grow old, imagining that wisdom is the natural consequence of old age ; as if that which is the greatest imperfection of human nature were most proper to confer upon us its highest perfection. Long observation, indeed, gives experience ; but this is a thing very different from wisdom, though it is the utmost advantage which old age can pretend to bestow upon us. Now, it is to be considered that virtue is a habit of the mind, to be acquired with great industry and application—to be forcibly introduced into the soul in opposition to vice, which, it is to be feared, has obtained long and undisturbed possession, and which must be dislodged with great difficulty, and by a persevering resolution. Now, this is not to be effected in a little time : the inhabitants are all of its side ; and it has so carefully strengthened the place, that the siege must be both long and doubtful. It is likely to be an achievement which will not only require the vigor of youth, but more time also

than old age has to bestow upon it. The chief end of a virtuous life is to give us as near a resemblance as is possible to God, to make us pure as he is pure ; that is, to raise us to the utmost degree of purity of which our frail nature is capable. Now, to defer this till we grow old, is to resolve to be as unlike God as possible ; in a confident, but very ridiculous assurance that old age will help our deformity, will give us a very good resemblance of Him, and will in an instant confer upon us purity like his—after we have passed our whole life in contracting pollution. So wonderful a change as this, it is indeed possible for Him who can do all things, though not for age, to make ; but it is such a change as no man can reasonably expect. Can we think, when the purest and sprightliest part of life has been drawn off in the service of vice, that the dregs are an offering fit for God ? Can we think it, then only, fit to please him, when we are unable to offend him any longer ? This is no better than being cast upon God Almighty by age and infirmity against our will, like mariners who are forced by storms and tempests upon a coast which they never intended to come near.

Neglect of Warnings.

THERE is one great sin, which, nevertheless, may not be amongst the number of those of which we are

sensible, and of which our consciences accuse us—and that sin is the neglect of warnings.

It is our duty to consider this life throughout as a probationary state: nor do we ever think truly or act rightly, but so long as we have this consideration fully before our eyes. Now one character of a state suited to qualify and prepare rational and improvable creatures for a better state, consists in the warnings which it is constantly giving them; and the providence of God, by placing us in such a state, becomes the author of those warnings. It is his paternal care which admonishes us by and through the events of life and death that pass before us.

Therefore it is a sin against Providence to neglect them. It is hardness and determination in sin; or it is blindness, which, in whole or in part, is wilful; or it is giddiness and levity and contemptuousness in a subject which admits not of these dispositions toward it without great offence to God.

A serious man hardly ever passes a day, never a week, without meeting with some warning to his conscience; without something to call to his mind his situation with respect to his future life. And these warnings, as perhaps was proper, come the thicker upon us the farther we advance in life. The dropping into the grave of our acquaintance and friends and relatives; what can be better calculated, not to prove, but to possess our hearts with a complete sense and perception of

the extreme peril and hourly precariousness of our condition ; viz., to teach this momentous lesson, that when we preach to you concerning heaven and hell, we are not preaching concerning things at a distance, things remote, things long before they come to pass ; but concerning things near, soon to be decided, in a very short time to be fixed one way or the other ? This is a truth of which we are warned by the course of mortality ; yet, with this truth confessed, with these warnings before us, we venture upon sin. But it will be said that the events which ought to warn us are out of our mind at the time. But this is not so. Were it that these things came to pass in the wide world only at large, it might be that we should seldom hear of them, or soon forget them. But the events take place when we ourselves are within our own doors, in our own families, amongst those with whom we have the most constant correspondence, the closest intimacy, the strictest connection. It is impossible to say that such events can be out of our mind, nor is it the fact. The fact is, that knowing them, we act in defiance of them, which is neglecting warnings in the worst sense possible. It aggravates the daringness ; it aggravates the desperation of sin : but it is so, nevertheless. Supposing these warnings to be sent by Providence, or that we believe, and have reason to believe, and ought to believe, that they are so sent, then the aggravation is very great.

We have warnings of every kind. Even youth

itself is continually warned that there is no reliance to be placed either on strength, or constitution, or early age: that, if they count upon life as a thing to be reckoned secure for a considerable number of years, they calculate most falsely; and if they act upon this calculation, by allowing themselves in the vices which are incidental to their years, under a notion that it will be long before they shall have to answer for them, and before that time come they shall have abundant season for repenting and amending; if they suffer such arguments to enter their minds, and act upon them, then are they guilty of neglecting God in his warnings. They not only err in point of just reasoning, but they neglect the warnings which God has expressly set before them. Or, if they take upon themselves to consider religion as a thing not made or calculated for them, as much too serious for their years, as made and intended for the old and the dying, at least as what is unnecessary to be entered upon at present, as what may be postponed to a more suitable time of life: whenever they think thus, they think very presumptuously; they are justly chargeable with neglecting warnings. And what is the event? These postponers never enter upon religion at all, in earnest or effectually: that is the end and event of the matter. To account for this, shall we say that they have so offended God, by neglecting his warnings, as to have forfeited his grace? Certainly we may say that this is not the method of obtaining his

grace : that his grace is necessary to our conversion. Neglecting warnings is not the way to obtain God's grace, and God's grace is necessary to conversion. The young, I repeat it again, want not warnings. Is it new ? Is it unheard of ? Is it not, on the contrary, the intelligence of every week, the experience of every neighborhood, that young men and young women are cut off ? Man is, in every sense, a flower of the field. The flower is liable to be cut down in its bloom and perfection as well as in its witherings and its decays. So is man ; and one probable cause of this ordination of Providence is, that no one of any age may be so confident of life as to allow himself to transgress God's laws : that all of every age may live in constant awe of their Maker.

A Life of Sin.

MEN know not what they are doing, when they enter upon vicious courses : what a struggle, what a contest, what misery, what torment they are preparing for themselves. I trust that there is hardly a man or woman living who enters into a course of sin with the design of remaining in it to the end ; who can crave the punishment of hell ; who intends to die in that state of sure perdition, to which a course of unrepented

sin must bring him or her. No ! that is not the plan even of the worst, much less of the generality of mankind. Their plan is to allow themselves to a certain length, and then stop ; for a certain time, and then reform ; in such and such opportunities and temptations, but in no more. Now, to such persons and such plans I say this, that it would not have cost them one tenth of the mortification, pain, and self-denial, to have kept themselves at a distance from sin, that it must and will cost them to break it off ; adding the further consideration, that, so long as men preserve their innocence, the consciousness of doing what is right is both the strongest possible support of their resolution, and the most constant source of satisfaction to their thoughts : but when men once begin to give way to vicious indulgences, another state of things takes place in their breasts. Disturbance at the heart, struggles and defeats, resolutions and relapses, self-reproach and self-condemnation, drive out all quietness and tranquillity of conscience. Peace within us is at an end. All is unsettled. Did the young and unexperienced know the truth of this matter—how much easier it is to keep innocency than to return to it ; how great and terrible is the danger that they do not return to it at all—surely they would see, and see in a light strong enough to influence their determination, that to adhere inviolably to the rules of temperance, soberness, and chastity, was their safety, their wisdom, their happiness. How many bitter

thoughts does the innocent man avoid! Serenity and cheerfulness are his portion. Hope is continually pouring its balm into his soul. His heart is at rest, while others are goaded and tortured by the stings of a wounded conscience, the remonstrances and risings up of principles which they cannot forget; perpetually teased by returning temptations, perpetually lamenting defeated resolutions. "There is no peace unto the wicked, saith my God." There is no comfort in such a life as this, let a man's outward circumstances be what they will. Genuine satisfaction of mind is not attainable under the recurring consciousness of being immersed in a course of sin, and the still remaining prevalence of religious principles. Yet either this must be the state of a sinner till he recover again his virtuous courses, or it must be a state infinitely worse; that is, it must be a state of entire surrender of himself to a life of sin, which will be followed by a death of despair, by ruin, final and eternal; by the wrath of God, by the pains of hell.

Wickedness.

WICKEDNESS is a weak, cowardly, and guilty thing, a fearful and trembling shadow. It is the child of ignorance and darkness; it is afraid of light, and cannot possibly withstand its power, nor endure the sight

of its glittering armor. It is allied to none but wretched, forlorn, and apostate spirits, who do what they can to support their own weak and tottering kingdom of darkness, but are only strong in weakness and impotency. The whole polity and commonwealth of devils are not so powerful as one child of light, one babe in Christ; they are not able to quench the least smoking flax, to extinguish one spark of grace. Darkness is not able to make resistance against light, but ever, as it comes, flies before it. But if wickedness invite the society of devils, so that those cursed fiends most readily apply themselves to it, and offer their service to feed and encourage it, because it is their own life and nature, their own kingdom of darkness, which they strive to enlarge, and to spread its dominions,—shall we therefore think that holiness, which is so nearly allied to God, has no good genius in the world to attend upon it, to help it, and encourage it? Shall not the kingdom of light be as true to its own interests, and as vigilant for its self-enlargement, as the kingdom of darkness?

Grace and Nature.

THERE are two articles of faith equally certain: one, that man, either in his state of creation or in that of grace, is raised above all nature, made like unto God,

and a partaker of the divine nature ; the other, that in his state of corruption and sin he is fallen from this greatness, and become like to the beasts. These two propositions are firm and certain ; the Holy Scripture bears a positive testimony to both. For in some places we read, “ My delights were with the sons of men.” “ I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.” “ I have said ye are gods ;” and in others, “ All flesh is grass.” “ Man is like unto the beasts that perish.” “ I said in my heart, concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that themselves are beasts.”

Repentance.

By repentance is meant not only to forsake our former evil deeds, but also to show forth good deeds greater than those. For, saith the Baptist, “ bring forth fruits meet for repentance.” But how shall we bring them forth ? If we do the opposite things : as, for instance, hast thou taken unjustly the goods of others ? henceforth give away even thine own. Hast thou insulted and stricken others ? Henceforth bless them that insult thee, and do good to them that smite thee. For it sufficeth not for our health to have plucked out the dart only, but we must also apply

remedies to the wound. Hast thou lived in self-indulgence, and been drunken in time past? Fast, and take care to drink water, in order to destroy the mischief that hath so grown up within thee. "But tell me the good also." "Seek peace, and pursue it." Not peace with man only, but peace with God. And he hath well said "pursue" her: for she is driven away and cast out; she hath left the earth, and is gone to sojourn in Heaven. Yet we shall be able to bring her back again if we will put away pride and boasting, and whatsoever things stand in her way, and will follow this temperate and frugal life. For nothing is more grievous than wrath and fierce anger. This renders men both puffed up and servile, by the former making them ridiculous, by the others hateful; and bringing in opposite vices, pride and flattery, at the same time. But if we will cut off the greediness of this passion, we shall be both lowly with exactness, and exalted with safety. For in our bodies too all distempers arise from excess; and when the elements thereof leave their proper limits, and go on beyond moderation, then all these countless diseases are generated, and grievous kinds of death. Somewhat of the same kind one may see take place with respect to the soul likewise.

That all our bodily ills are caused by the wickedness of the soul, is shown both by him "who had the palsy thirty and eight years," and by him that was "let down through the roof;" and from many other

things likewise one may perceive this. Let us do away then with the well-spring of our evils, and all the channels of our diseases will be stayed. For the disease is not palsy only, but also our sin; and this more than that, by how much a soul is better than a body.

Let us therefore now draw nigh unto the Saviour; let us entreat Him that he would brace our paralyzed soul, and leaving all things that pertain to this life, let us take account of the things spiritual only.

Neither must we think lightly of sin because we have no pain in sinning; rather on this very account most of all should we lament, that we feel not the anguish of our offences. For not because sin bites not doth this come to pass, but because the offending soul is insensible. Regard with this view them that have a feeling of their own sins, how they wail more bitterly than such as are being cut or burned; how many things they do, how many suffer, how greatly they mourn and lament, in order to be delivered from their evil conscience. They would not do any such thing unless they were exceedingly pained in soul.

The best thing, then, is to avoid sin in the first instance: the next to it is to feel that we sin, and thoroughly amend ourselves. But if we have not this, how shall we pray to God and ask forgiveness of our sins, we who take no account of these matters? For when thou thyself who hast offended art unwilling to know so much as this very fact, that thou hast sinned, for what

manner of offences wilt thou entreat God for pardon? For what thou knowest not? And how wilt thou know the greatness of the benefit? Tell therefore thine offences in particular, that thou mayest learn for what thou receivest forgiveness, that so thou mayest become grateful toward thy Benefactor.

Let us now take courage at His love to man, and let us show forth an anxious repentance before the day comes on which permits us not to profit thereby. For as yet all depends on us, but then He that judges hath alone control over the sentence. Let us therefore "confess our transgressions unto the Lord;" let us bewail, let us mourn. For if we should be able to prevail upon the Judge before the appointed day to forgive us our sins, then we need not so much as enter into the court; as on the other hand, if this be not done, He will hear us publicly in the presence of the world, and we shall no longer have any hope of pardon. For no one of those who have not done away with their sins here, when he hath departed thither shall be able to escape his account for them; but as they who are taken out of these earthly prisons are brought in their chains to the place of judgment, even so all souls, when they have gone away hence bound with the manifold chains of their sins, are led to the awful judgment seat.

On account of all these things, let us entreat the Redeemer of our souls that He would both burst asunder our bands and remove this our cruel jailer, and having

set us free from the burden of these iron chains, He would make our spirits lighter than any wing. And as we entreat Him, so let us contribute our own part—earnestness and consideration, and an excellent zeal. For thus we shall be able both in a short time to be freed from the evils which now oppress us, and to learn in what condition we were before, and to lay on the liberty which belongs to us; and to which God grant we may attain, by the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Reformation of Heart.

MANY are reformed in human motives; many are only partially reformed: but those only, who, as our great poet says, are “*reformed altogether*,” are *converted*. There is no complete reformation of the conduct without a revolution in the heart. Ceasing from some sins, retaining others in a less degree, or adopting such as are merely creditable, or flying from one sin to another, or ceasing from the external act without any internal change of disposition, is not Christian reformation. The natural bias must be changed. The actual offence will no more be pardoned than cured, if the inward corruption be not eradicated. To be “alive unto God, through Jesus Christ,” must follow “death unto sin.” There cannot be new aims and ends where there is not a new principle to produce them.

It is not casting a set of opinions into a mould and a set of duties into a system, which constitutes the Christian religion. The circumference must have a centre ; the body must have a soul ; the performances must have a principle. Outward observances were wisely constituted to rouse our forgetfulness, to awaken our secular spirits, to call back our negligent hearts. They were designed to execute holy thoughts, to quicken us to holy deeds, but not to be used as equivalents to either.

Nothing short of a uniform and stable principle, that fixedness in religion which directs a man in all his actions, aims, and pursuits, to *God as his ultimate end*, can give consistency to his character or tranquillity to his soul.

Surrender of the Heart.

WE give God our heart in the lowest degree, when we *seek* our happiness in Him ; when we do not seek it in gratifying “ the desire of the flesh ;” in any of the pleasures of sense ; nor in gratifying the “ desire of the eye ;” in any of the pleasures of the imagination, arising from grand, or new, or beautiful objects, whether of nature or art ; neither in the pride of life ; in the honor that cometh of men ; in being beloved, esteemed, and applauded by them, nor in the acquisition of wealth by

“laying up treasures on earth.” When we seek happiness in none of these, but in God alone, then we, in some sense, give Him our heart. But, in a more proper sense, we give God our heart, when we not only seek, but *find* happiness in Him. This happiness begins when we know Him by the teaching of his own Spirit; when it pleases the Father to reveal His son in our hearts, so that we can humbly say, “My Lord and my God;” and when the Son is pleased to reveal the Father in us, “by the Spirit of adoption crying in our hearts, Abba, Father,” and bearing his testimony to our spirits that we are the children of God, then it is that “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.” And according to the degree of our love is the degree of our happiness.

“The One Thing Needful.”

AND this is that which should be the top and sum of Christian desires,—to have, or want any other thing indifferently, but to be resolved and resolute in this, to seek a share in this grace, the free love of God, and the sure evidences of it within you, the fruit of holiness, and the graces of His Spirit. But the most of us are otherwise taken up: we will not be convinced how basely and foolishly we are busied, though in the best and most respected employments of the world, so long

as we neglect our noblest trade of growing rich in grace, and the comfortable enjoyment of the love of God. Our Saviour tells us of "one thing needful," importing that all other things are comparatively unnecessary, by works and mere impertinencies; and yet in these we lavish out our short and uncertain time; we let the other stand by till we find leisure. Men who are altogether profane, think not on it at all. Some others possibly deceive themselves thus, and say, When I have done with such a business in which I am engaged, then I will sit down seriously to this, and bestow more time and pains on these things, which are undeniably greater and better, and more worthy of it. But this is a slight that is in danger to undo us. What if we attain not to the end of that business, but end ourselves before it? Or if we do not, yet some other business may step in after that. Oh, then, say we, that must be despatched also. Thus, by such delays, we may lose the present opportunity, and, in the end, our own souls.

The Two States.

THE godly man hates the evil he possibly by temptation hath been drawn to do, and loves the good he is frustrated of, and having intended, hath not attained

to do. The sinner, who hath his denomination from sin as his course, hates the good which sometimes he is forced to do, and loves that sin which many times he does not, either wanting occasion and means, so that he cannot do it, or, through the check of an enlightened conscience, possibly dares not do; and though so bound up from the act, as a dog in a chain, yet the habit, the natural inclination and desire in him are still the same, the strength of his affection is carried to sin. So in the weakest sincere Christian, there is that predominant sincerity and desire of holy walking, according to which he is called a righteous person: the Lord is pleased to give him that name, and account him so, being upright in heart, though often failing.

Conversion and Regeneration.

TRUE conversion is not so slight a work as we commonly account it. It is not the outward change of some bad customs, which gains the name of a reformed man, in the ordinary dialect; it is a new birth and being, and elsewhere called a new creation. Though it be but a change in qualities, yet it is such a one, and the qualities are so far different, that it bears the name of the most substantial productions: from “*children of*

disobedience,” and that which is linked with it, “*heirs of wrath*,” to be “*sons of God*,” and “*heirs of glory*.”

Nature cannot raise itself to this any more than a man can give natural being to himself. It is not a superficial change; it is a new life and being. A moral man, in his changes and reformations of himself, is still the same man. Though he reform so far, as that men, in their ordinary phrase, shall call him quite another man, yet, in truth, till he be born again, there is no new nature in him. “The sluggard turns on his bed as the door on the hinges,” says Solomon. Thus the natural man turns from one custom and posture to another, but never turns off. But the Christian, by virtue of this new birth, can say indeed, *Ego non sum ego*, I am not the same man I was.

Consider this dignity, and be kindled with an ambition worthy of it. How doth a Christian pity that poor vanity which men make so much noise about, of their kindred and extraction! You that are nobles, aspire to this honorable condition; add this nobleness to the other, for it far surpasses it; make it the crown of all your honors and advantages. And you that are of low birth, or if you have any stain on your birth, this is the only way to make up and repair all, and truly to ennoble you. This is worth glorying in indeed, to be of the highest blood-royal, sons of the King of kings by this new birth and in the nearest relation to Him! This adds matchless honor to that birth which is so honorable in the esteem of the world.

Conscience.

How deeply seated the conscience is in the human soul, is seen in the effect which sudden calamities produce on guilty men, even when unaided by any determinate notion or fears of punishment after death. The wretched criminal, as one rudely awakened from a long sleep, bewildered with the new light, and half recollecting, half striving to recollect, a fearful something, he knows not what, but which he will recognize as soon as he hears the name, already interprets the calamities into judgments, executions of a sentence passed by an invisible judge ; as if the past pyre of the last judgment were already kindled in an unknown distance, and some flashes of it, darting forth at intervals beyond the rest, were flying and lightening upon the face of his soul. The calamity may consist in the loss of fortune, or character, or reputation ; but you hear no regrets from him. Remorse extinguishes all regret ; and remorse is the implicit creed of the guilty.

If you would have a good conscience, you must by all means have so much light, so much knowledge of the will of God, as may regulate you, and show you your way, may teach you how to do, and speak, and think, as in His presence.

Good Resolutions.

I. I RESOLVE, by the grace of God, to be more watchful over my temper.

II. Not to speak idly or harshly.

III. To watch over my thoughts; not to indulge in vain, idle, resentful, impatient, worldly imaginations.

IV. To strive after closer communion with God.

V. To let no hour pass without lifting up my heart to him through Christ.

VI. Not to let a day pass without some thoughts of death.

VII. To ask myself every night, when I lie down, Am I fit to die?

VIII. To labor to do and to suffer the whole will of God.

IX. To cure my over anxiety, by casting myself on God in Christ.

Universal Conscientiousness.

BE persuaded to practise the following directions, and your conscience will continue right:

I. Take heed of every sin: count no sin small, and

obey every command with your might. Watch against the first risings of sin, and beware of the borders of sin. Shun the very appearance of evil. Venture not upon temptations or occasions of sin.

II. Consider yourself as living under God's eye: live as in the sensible presence of the jealous God. Remember, all things are naked and open before him! You cannot deceive him, for he is infinite wisdom; you cannot fly from him, for he is everywhere; you cannot bribe him, for he is righteousness itself! Speak as knowing God hears you: walk as knowing God besets you on every side. The Lord is with you while you are with him; that is, you shall enjoy his favorable presence while you live in his awful presence.

III. Be serious and frequent in the examination of your heart and life. There are some duties like those parts of the body, the want of which may be supplied by other parts; but the want of these nothing can supply. Every evening review your carriage through the day,—what you have done or thought that was unbecoming your character: whether your heart has been instant upon religion, and indifferent to the world. Have a special care of two portions of time, namely, morning and evening: the morning to forethink what you have to do, and the evening to examine whether you have done what you ought.

IV. Let every action have reference to your whole life, and not to a part only. Let all your subordinate

ends be suitable to the great end of your living. "Exercise yourself unto godliness." Be as diligent in religion as thou wouldst have thy children that go to school be in learning. Let thy whole life be a preparation for heaven, like the preparation of wrestlers for the combat.

V. Do not venture on sin because Christ hath purchased a pardon. That is a most horrible abuse of Christ. For this very reason there was no sacrifice under the law for any wilful sin, lest people should think they knew the price of sins, as those who deal in Romish indulgences.

VI. Be nothing in your own eyes : for what is it, alas, that we have to be proud of? Our very conception was sinful, our birth painful, our life toilsome, our death we know not what ! But all this is nothing to the state of our soul. If we know this, what excuse have we for pride ?

VII. Consult duty, not events. We have nothing to do but to mind our duty. All speculations that tend not to holiness are among your superfluities ; but forebodings of what may befall to you doing your duty may be reckoned among your sins : and to venture upon sin to avoid danger, is to sink the ship for fear of pirates. O how quiet, as well as holy, would our lives be, had we learned that single lesson—to be careful for nothing, but to do our duty, and leave all consequences to God ! What madness for silly dust to prescribe to

Infinite Wisdom!—to let go our work and meddle with God's. He hath managed the concerns of the world, and of every individual person in it, without giving cause of complaint to any, for above these five thousand years. And does He now need *your* counsel? Nay, it is *your* business to mind your own duty.

VIII. What advice you would give another, take yourself. The worst of men are apt to lay burdens on others, which if they would take on themselves, they would be rare Christians.

IX. Do nothing on which you cannot pray for a blessing. Every action of a Christian that is good is sanctified by the word and prayer. It becomes not a Christian to do anything so trivial that he cannot pray over it. And if he would but bestow a serious ejaculation on every occurrent action, such a prayer would cut off all things sinful, and encourage all things lawful.

X. Think, and speak, and do what you are persuaded Christ himself would do in your case were He on earth. It becomes a Christian rather to be an example than to follow one. But by imitating Christ you become an example to all, who was, and is, and ever will be, our absolute pattern. O Christians, how did Christ pray, and redeem time for prayer! How did Christ preach, out of whose mouth proceeded no other but gracious words! What time did Christ spend in impertinent discourse? How did Christ go up and down doing good to men, and what was pleasing to God! I

commend to you these four memorials : 1. Mind duty ; 2. What is the duty of another in your case, is your own ; 3. Do not meddle with anything if you cannot say, The blessing of the Lord be upon it ; 4. Above all, sooner forget your Christian name than forget to eye Christ ! Whatever treatment you meet with from the world, remember Him and follow his steps, “who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again ; but committed himself to Him who judgeth righteously.”

Worldly Hopes.

WORLDLY hopes often mock men, and so cause them to be ashamed ; and men take it as a great blot, and are most of all ashamed of those things that discover weakness of judgment in them. Now worldly hopes do thus : they put the fool upon a man ; when he hath judged himself sure, and laid so much weight and expectation on them, then they break and fail him ; they are not living, but lying hopes and dying hopes ; they die often before us, and we live to bury them, and see our own folly and infelicity in trusting to them ; but at the utmost they die with us when we die, and can accompany us no further. But this hope answers ex-

pectation to the full, and much beyond it, and deceives no way but in that happy way of far exceeding it.

A living hope—living in death itself! The world dare say no more for its device, than *Dum spiro, spero*; but the children of God can add by virtue of this living hope, *Dum exspiro, spero*. It is a fearful thing when a man and all his hopes die together. Thus saith Solomon of the wicked, Prov. xi. 7: “When he dieth, then die his hopes,” “but the righteous hath hope in his death.” Death, which cuts the sinews of all other hopes, and turns men out of all other inheritances, alone fulfils this hope, and ends it in fruition—as a messenger sent to bring the children of God home to the possession of their inheritance.

The Earthly Inheritance.

WHEN we see a man rising in preferment or estate, or admired for excellent gifts or endowments of mind, we think there is a happy man; but we consider not that none of all those things are matter of inheritance; within a while he is to be turned out of all, and if he have not somewhat beyond all those to look to, he is but a miserable man, and so much the more miserable, that once he seemed and was reputed happy.

It is needless to fetch too great a compass to evince the corruptibleness of all inheritances. Besides what they are in themselves, it is a shorter way to prove them corruptible in relation to us and our possessing them, by our own corruptibleness and corruption, or perishing out of this life in which we enjoy them. We are here *inter peritura perituri*; the things are passing which we enjoy, and we are passing who enjoy them. An earthly inheritance is so called in regard of succession; but to every one it is at the most lent for term of life. As one of the kings of Spain replied to one of his courtiers, who, thinking to please his master, wished that kings were immortal: "*If that had been,*" said he, "*I should never have been king.*" When death comes, that removes a man out of all his possessions to give place to another; therefore are these inheritances decaying and dying in relation to us, because we decay and die; and when a man dies, his inheritance and honors, and all things here are at an end in respect of him; yea, we may say the world ends to him.

We breathe up and down in an infected air, and are very receptive of the infection by our own corruption within us. We readily turn the things we possess here to occasions and instruments of sin, and think there is no liberty nor delight in their use without abusing them. How few are they who can carry a full cup even; who can have digestion strong enough for the right use of great places and estates; who can bear

preferment without pride, and riches without covetousness, and ease without wantonness !

Then as these earthly inheritances are stained with sin in their use, so what grief, and strife, and contentions about obtaining or retaining them ! Doth not the matter of possession, this *meum* and *tuum*, divide many times the affections of those who are knit together in nature, or other strict ties, and prove the very apple of strife betwixt nearest friends ?

If we trace great estates to their first original, how few will be found that owe not their beginning either to fraud, or rapine, or oppression ! and the greatest empires and kingdoms in the world have had their foundations laid in blood. Are not these defiled inheritances ?

If these things were believed, they would persuade for themselves ; we should not need any entreaties to move you to seek after the “inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” Have we not experience enough of the vanity and misery of things corruptible ? and are not a great part of our days already spent amongst them ? Is it not time to consider whether we be provided with anything surer and better than what we have here ; whether we have any inheritance to go home to after our wandering ? or can say with the Apostle, “*We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*”

The Unrest of the Soul.

I.

GOD hath suited every creature he hath made with a convenient good to which it tends, and in the obtaining of which it rests and is satisfied. Natural bodies have all their own natural place, whither, if not hindered, they move incessantly till they be in it; and they declare, by resting there, that they are where they would be. Sensitive creatures are carried to seek a sensitive good, as agreeable to their rank in being, and attaining that, aim no further. Now, in this is the excellency of man, that he is made capable of a communion with his Maker, and, because capable of it, is unsatisfied without it: the soul being cut out to that largeness, cannot be filled with less. Though he is fallen from his right to that good, and from all right desire of it, yet, not from a capacity of it—no, nor from a necessity of it, for the answering and filling of his capacity.

Though the heart, once gone from God, turns continually further away from him, and moves not toward him, till it be renewed, yet even in that wandering it retains that natural relation to God, as its centre, that it hath no true rest elsewhere, nor can by any means

find it. It is made for Him, and is therefore still restless till it meet with him.

It is true, the natural man takes much pains to quiet his heart by other things, and digests many vexations with hopes of contentment in the end and accomplishment of some design he hath, but still the heart misgives. Many times he attains not the thing he seeks ; but if he do, yet he never attains the satisfaction he seeks and expects in it, but only learns from that to desire something further, and still hunts on after a fancy, drives his own shadow before him, and never overtakes it ; and if he did, yet it is but a shadow. And so in running from God, besides the sad end, he carries an interwoven punishment with his sin, the natural disquiet and vexation of his spirit, fluttering to and fro, and *finding no rest for the sole of his foot* ; the waters of inconstancy and vanity *covering the whole face of the earth*.

We study to debase our souls, and to make them content with less than they are made for ; yea, we strive to make them carnal, that they may be pleased with sensible things. And in this, men attain a brutish content for a time, forgetting their higher good. But certainly, we cannot think it sufficient, and that no more were to be desired beyond ease and plenty, and pleasures of sense, for then, a beast in good case and a good pasture, might contest with us in point of happiness, and carry it away ; for that sensitive good he en-

joys without sin, and without the vexation that is mixed with us in all.

These things are too gross and heavy. The soul, the immortal soul, descended from heaven, must either be more happy or remain miserable. The highest, the increated Spirit, is the proper good, the Father of spirits, that pure and full good which raises the soul above itself; whereas all other things draw it down below itself. So then, it is never well with the soul, but when it is near unto God, yea, in its union with him, married to him; mismatching itself elsewhere, it hath never anything but shame and sorrow.

II.

The desire of an immortal soul can never be satisfied by wealth, honor, pleasure, or any other earthly good; all these together cannot give rest, which is the lowest ingredient of happiness to a never-dying spirit. Every creature cries, happiness is not in me, the height and the depth proclaim "the Creator hath not implanted in me a capacity of giving happiness;" therefore, with all thy skill and pains, thou canst not extract it from me; and indeed the more pains we take to extract it from any earthly object, the greater and more certain will prove our disappointment. But, may we not find happiness in learning?

“Content of spirit must from science flow,
For it is a god-like attribute to know.”

The experience of the wisest and most learned of all ages has taught us, that true happiness cannot result from the pursuit and attainment of knowledge: it has been said by one of the most eminent among the Muses, that “a fool may find a Paradise on earth, but a wise man can find none.” Knowledge, as the Apostle observes, puffeth up, and where pride is, happiness is not; they are utterly inconsistent with each other, so much reason is there for the melancholy reflection of the poet:

“Avails it, then, O reason, to be wise?
To see this mournful sight with quicker eyes?
To know with more distinction to complain?
And have superior sense in feeling pain?”

As there is but one God in heaven above and on the earth beneath, so there is but one happiness for created spirits, either in heaven or on earth. This one God made our hearts for himself; and it cannot rest, till it resteth in him. It is true that while we are in the vigor of youth and prime of life, while the world smiles upon us and we are surrounded by earthly comforts and pleasures, we realize pleasing illusions, and enjoy a transitory happiness; but it is of short continuance; it vanishes like a shadow, being neither solid nor substantial: it does not satisfy the soul; and

though we possess all this world can give, we feel an undefined longing, an aching void ; described by Horace two thousand years ago :

“ Amidst our plenty something still,
To me, to thee, to him, is wanting.”

What is this something but the love and knowledge of God, without which no human spirit can be happy ?

This happiness is but another name for religion, the nature and essence of which do not lie in this or that set of notions vulgarly called faith, neither in any prescribed round of duties, nor any number of outward actions, but consist alone in the knowledge and love of God as manifested in the Son of his love through the eternal Spirit, leading to every heavenly temper, and to every good word and work, by which the true Christian, believing in the promise of his Heavenly Father, seeks diligently, and finds “ the pearl of great price.”

Restlessness of the Heart.

God made us for himself, and our heart cannot rest until it resteth in Him. The return of our mind to God is that in which sincere religion begins. There is a sort of search for God in our spiritual nature, even

before we know Him, or aspire to communion with Him. But the natural heart is in itself wholly departed from God, and enslaved to earth and sense. To bring this fugitive back, therefore, to its original owner, is the test and matter of true religion, the work of the Divine Spirit taking of the things of Christ and showing them with power to our heart.

True Religion.

How strange is it that any who reads the Scripture can mistake its meaning respecting the way of salvation, or the best means of walking in that way ! What can go beyond that simple position, that, “in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature” ? and, also, that “to be carnally minded is death ; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” ? And what is this but a living in the view, and under the sense, of things Divine and eternal ; so as habitually and supremely to hunger and thirst after inward righteousness—the mind and spirit which were in Christ ? Our having this, and the steady, consistent acting upon it, and cherishing it by prayer and watchfulness, seem to me the essence of practical religion. What, then, but this need we be anxious about ? Where this is, it will soon become matter of

comfortable experience ; the exercise of this disposition will be attended with sweet fruits ; the reality of the spiritual temper will evince itself by the consciousness of pure and holy tastes and feelings ; and an indescribable knowledge of God and the Redeemer will gradually grow up and become confirmed within us, in consequence of increasing effects which God only could produce. We shall feel that there is an invisible and eternal world, from the habitual attractions of it overcoming in us the attractions of the visible world ; and, from the uniformity, the certainty, the efficacy, the solid rationality of all that is thus effected in us, we shall recognize the all-glorious Author, and come, as it were, into a degree of mental contact with Deity, and a sublime and blessed acquaintance and friendship with the Lord Jesus Christ. This is Christianity ; and I know it to be that which would infinitely outweigh all that ever was enjoyed from this world, if all earthly pleasures from the foundation of this terrestrial system were to be concentrated, and the essence of them all possessed by some one person. We know the nature and kind of all that the world has to confer ; and, surely, the most painful things in true religion are infinitely pleasanter than the most pleasurable things that man, not religious, is capable of enjoying.

The End of our Being.

I.

GOD, who made us, made us on purpose to be happy ; for what other design could infinite love propose to itself in our creation ? And proposing to himself this end, he endowed us with faculties and capacities that might fit us for the contemplation and enjoyment of himself and his works : the world, provided by him for our entertainment, he filled with all things that could minister either to our necessities or delights. Here God has planted us, not as inhabitants, but sojourners : for this is but our state of probation ; angels had their time of trial, so have men ; here he would have us aspire after, as near as we can, that life angels led in heaven, for we are one day to be equal to them : here he would have us learn and practise those virtues which fit us for the society and enjoyment of that kingdom wherein dwells righteousness, for that is the blessed end and consummation of all our endeavors, desires, and hopes : but when we make heaven the abode, the seat of perfect happiness, we do not thereby suppose that it is banished from the earth ; but rather, on the contrary, if that state be the consummation of all things, it is necessary to be concluded that every step we advance nearer to it, we mount and ascend higher in brighter, calmer, and purer

regions. Heaven is like the glorious building whose access is full of delight and beauty : for as that youth which precedes our manhood has its sweetness, its beauty, its natural perfection and pleasure, so has this mortal state which precedes our angelical, its proper degree of perfection and blessedness : and this is no small one neither ; for, as we are created but a little lower than the angels, in respect to the dignity of our nature, so surely our happiness begins nearly to approach and resemble theirs, when our mind, filled with divine truths, charity and hopes, becomes free, generous, resolved, constant, cheerful, meek, gentle, devout, heavenly ; when it has so accustomed itself to virtue, and familiarly acquainted itself with heaven, that the sins and pleasures of the sensual part of the world look like the manners and entertainments, not only of a foreign, but barbarous and impoverished country : and when, lastly, by its frequent retirements from the body, and daily commerce with rational and spiritual pleasures, it not only asserts its sovereignty over it, but begins to live so independent of it, that at the last, when it shall in death mount up upon the wings of pure flame to heaven, it shall not suffer as if the body needed to be torn from it, but shall let it fall, as Elijah did his mantle. Those complaints, therefore, which we make against our present state, and those reproaches with which we outrage and vilify our nature, are false and unjust ; for we are by God created and designed for happiness, and

this happiness God hath been pleased to put in our own power, to place within our reach. There is no fate, but what God has made us ourselves arbiters of: we lie under no necessity, no fatality, but what our own vices betray us to: nor do we stand in need of the indulgences of fortune; the tranquillity and pleasure of a virtuous man is an image of God's own; it springs from within, not from without. It is true there are difficulties which obstruct our progress to happiness; but they are such as all wise and good men have conquered: it is true, nature labors under its infirmities, that is, sensual propensions and inclinations; but it is strengthened and supported by reason, by revelation, by grace. We may fall a sacrifice to God's wrath: but it must be after we have lived long in contempt of his mercy, and obstinate defiance of his grace. These considerations should raise and exalt the mind of man; they should inspire with desires and hopes worthy of rational and immortal souls; like the Israelites, when they marched out of Egypt, we should dream of nothing but triumph and happiness.

II.

It is necessary that every man should consider, that, since God hath given him an excellent nature, wisdom and choice, an understanding soul, and an immortal spirit; having made him lord over the beasts, and but

a little lower than the angels ; he hath also appointed for him a work and a service great enough to employ those abilities, and hath also designed him to a state of life after this, to which he can only arrive by that service and obedience. And therefore, as every man is wholly God's own portion by the title of creation, so all our labors and care, all our powers and faculties, must be wholly employed in the service of God, and even all the days of our life ; that this life being ended, we may live with him forever.

Neither is it sufficient that we think of the service of God as a work of the least necessity, or of small employment, but that it be done by us as God intended it ; and that it be done with great earnestness and passion, with much zeal and desire ; that we refuse no labor ; that we bestow upon it much time ; that we use the best guides, and arrive at the end of glory by all the ways of grace, of prudence, and religion.

And, indeed, if we consider how much of our lives is taken up by the needs of nature ; how many years are wholly spent, before we come to any use of reason ; how many years more before that reason is useful to us to any great purposes ; how imperfect our discourse is made by our evil education, false principles, ill company, bad examples, and want of experience ; how many parts of our wisest and best years are spent in eating and sleeping, in necessary business and unnecessary vanities, in worldly civilities and less useless

circumstances, in the learning arts and sciences, languages, or trades ; that little portion of hours that is left for the practices of piety and religious walking with God, is so short and trifling, that were not the goodness of God infinitely great, it might seem unreasonable or impossible for us to expect of him eternal joys in heaven, even after the well spending those few minutes which are left for God and God's service, after we have served ourselves and our occasions.

And yet it is considerable, that the fruit which comes from the many days of recreation and vanity is very little ; and although we scatter much, yet we gather but little profit : but from the few hours we spend in prayer and the exercises of a pious life, the return is great and profitable ; and what we sow in the minutes and spare portions of a few years, grows up to crowns and sceptres in a happy and glorious eternity.

Time.

WHAT is past ought to give us no uneasiness, except that of regret for our faults. And what is to come ought still less to affect us, because it is nothing with regard to us now, and perhaps we shall never live to see it. The present is the only time which is properly

ours; and we ought to use this in conformity to the will of God. To this our thoughts should be principally directed. Yet the world is generally so restless, that men scarcely ever think of the present time, and the instant they are now actually living, but of those in which they are to live. So that we are always in a disposition to live in future, but never to live now. Our Lord has not chosen that our foresight should extend beyond the day that is present. These are the limits which He requires us to observe, both for the sake of our salvation, and for our own repose.

Employment of Time.

GOD hath given to man a short time here upon earth, and yet upon this short time eternity depends; but so, that for every hour of our life we must give account to the great Judge of men and angels. And this is it which our blessed Saviour told us, that we must account for every idle word; not meaning that every word which is not designed to edification, or is less prudent, shall be reckoned for a sin; but that the time which we spend in our idle talking and unprofitable discoursings, that time which might and ought to have been employed to spiritual and useful purposes, that is to be accounted for.

For we must remember that we have a great work to do, many enemies to conquer, many evils to prevent, much danger to run through, many difficulties to be mastered, many necessities to serve, and much good to do ; besides the needs of nature and of relation, our private and our public cares, and duties of the world, which necessity and the providence of God have adopted into the family of Religion.

God hath given every man work enough to do, that there shall be no room for idleness ; and yet hath so ordered the world, that there shall be space for devotion. He that hath the fewest businesses of the world is called upon to spend more time in the dressing of his soul ; and he that hath the most affairs may so order them that they shall be a service of God ; whilst at certain periods they are blessed with prayers and actions of religion, and all day long are hallowed by a holy intention.

Let all the intervals or void space of time be employed in prayers, reading, meditating, works of nature, recreation, charity, friendliness and neighborhood, and means of spiritual and corporal health ; ever remembering so to work in our calling as not to neglect the work of our high calling ; but to begin and end the day with God, with such forms of devotion as shall be proper to our necessities.

In the midst of the works of thy calling, often retire to God in short prayers and ejaculations ; and those

may make up the want of those larger portions of time, which, it may be, thou desirest for devotion, and in which thou thinkest other persons have advantage of thee ; for so thou reconcilest the outward work and thy inward calling, the church and the commonwealth, the employment of the body and the interest of thy soul : for be sure that God is present at thy breathings and hearty sighings of prayer, as soon as at the longest offices of less busied persons ; and thy time is as truly sanctified by a trade, and devout though shorter prayers, as by the longer offices of those whose time is not filled up with labor and useful business.

Persons of great quality, and of no trade, are to be most prudent and curious in their employment and traffic of time. They are miserable, if their education hath been so loose and undisciplined as to leave them unfurnished of skill to spend their time ; but most miserable are they, if such misgovernment and unskillfulness make them fall into vicious and baser company, and drive on their time by the sad minutes and periods of sin and death. They that are learned know the worth of time, and the manner how well to improve a day ; but for others of them, that are unlearned, let them choose good company, such as may not tempt them to a vice, or join with them in any ; but that may supply their defects by counsel and discourse, by way of conduct and conversation. Let them learn easy and useful things, read history and the laws of the land,

learn the customs of their country, the condition of their own estate, profitable and charitable contrivances of it ; let them study prudently to govern their families, learn the burdens of their tenants, the necessities of their neighbors, and in their proportion supply them, and reconcile their enmities, and prevent their lawsuits, or quickly end them ; and in this glut of leisure and disemployment, let them set apart greater portions of their time for religion and the necessities of their souls.

Do not the “work of God negligently” and idly ; let not thy heart be upon the world when thy hand is lifted up in prayer ; and be sure to prefer an action of religion, in its place and proper season, before all worldly pleasure, letting secular things, that may be dispensed with in themselves, in these circumstances wait upon the other. In honoring God and doing his work, put forth all thy strength ; for of that time only thou mayest be most confident that it is gained, which is prudently and zealously spent in God’s service.

He is happy that can secure every hour to a sober or a pious employment : but the duty consists not scrupulously in minutes or half hours, but in greater portions of time—provided that no minute be employed in sin, and the greater portion of our time be spent in sober employment, and all the appointed days, and some portions of every day, be allowed for religion. In all the

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lesser parts of time we are left to our own elections and prudent management, and to the consideration of the great degrees and differences of glory that are laid up in heaven for us, according to the degrees of our care, and piety, and diligence.

A Thought.

I HAVE thought, I am a creature of a day, passing through life, as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God: just hovering over the great gulf; till a few moments hence, I am no more seen! I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing, the way to heaven: how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book! O give me that book! At any price, give me the Book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri*. Here then I am far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone: only God is here. In his presence I open, I read his book; for this end, to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does anything appear dark or intricate? I lift up my heart to the Father of Lights.—Lord, is it

not thy word, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God?" Thou "givest liberally and upbraidest not." Thou hast said, "If any be willing to do thy will he shall know." I am willing to do: let me know thy will. I then search after and consider parallel passages of scripture, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual!" I meditate thereon, with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable. If any doubt still remains, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God; and then the writings whereby, being dead, they yet speak.

Judgment and a Future State.

IN all thy thoughts and desires, thy actions and pursuits, "have respect to the end;" and consider how thou wilt appear before that awful Judge, from whom nothing is hidden, who is not to be perverted by bribes, nor softened by excuses, but invariably judgeth righteous judgment. Why lookest thou not forward, to prepare thyself for the day of his righteous judgments, in which one man cannot possibly be excused or defended by another, but every one will have as much as he can answer for himself.

The patient man hath in this world a true and salubrious purgatory, who, when he is injured, is more

grieved for the sin of the offender, than for the wrong that is done to himself; who can ardently pray for his enemies, and from his heart forgive their offences; who feels no reluctance to ask forgiveness of others; who is sooner moved to compassion, than provoked to anger; who constantly denies his own will, and endeavors to bring the body into absolute and total subjection to the spirit. But through an inordinate love for the indulgence of corrupt flesh and blood, we deceive ourselves into total ignorance and negligence with respect to all the interests of our immortal spirits.

The more thou now indulgest thyself, and gratifiest the desires of the flesh, the more fuel dost thou heap up as food for that fire which is never quenched. The pains of that tremendous state will arise from the nature and degree of every man's sins. There the spiritual sluggard shall be incessantly urged with burning stings, and the glutton tortured with inconceivable hunger and thirst: there the luxurious and voluptuous shall be overwhelmed with waves of flaming pitch and horrid sulphur; the envious, with the pain of disappointed malignity, shall howl like mad dogs: the proud shall be filled with shame, and the covetous straitened in inexpressible want. One hour of torment there will be more insupportable than a hundred years of the severest sufferings and self-denial in this life. There no respite of pain, no consolation of sorrow can be found; while here some intermission of labor, some

comfort from holy friends, is not incompatible with the most rigorous devotion.

Be now, therefore, solicitous for thy redemption, and afflicted for the sins that oppose it, that in the day of judgment thou mayest stand securely among the blessed. Then shall he rise up in judgment, who now meekly submits to the judgment of others; then the humble and poor in spirit shall have great confidence, and the proud shall be encompassed with fear on every side. Then it will be evident to all that he was wise in this world, who had learned to be despised as a fool for the love of Christ; the remembrance of tribulation patiently endured shall become sweet, and “all iniquity shall stop her mouth.” Then every devout man shall rejoice, and every impious man shall mourn. Then shall the mortified and subdued flesh triumph over that which was pampered in ease and indulgence; the coarse garment shall shine, and the soft raiment lose its lustre, and the homely cottage shall be more extolled than the gilded palace. Then simple obedience shall be more highly prized than refined subtlety, and a pure conscience more than learned philosophy; the contempt of riches shall be of more value than all the treasures of worldly men; and thou shalt have greater comfort from having prayed devoutly every day, than from having fared deliciously; and shalt more rejoice that thou hast kept silence long, than that thou hadst talked much. Then works of holiness shall avail thee more

than the multitude of fine words : and a life of self-denial shall give thee more satisfaction than all earthly delights could bestow.

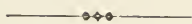
Learn, therefore, now to suffer under afflictions comparatively light, that thou mayest be delivered from sufferings so grievous. Here thou mayest first make trial how much there thou wilt be able to sustain ; for if thou art able to bear but little now, how wilt thou then bear such amazing and lasting torments ? If only a slight suffering makes thee so impatient now, what will the rage of hell do then ? Behold and consider ! thou canst not have a double paradise ; thou canst not enjoy a life of sinful delight and pleasure upon earth, and afterwards reign with Christ in heaven.

If to this very day thou hadst lived in honor and pleasure, what would it avail if thou art to die the next moment ? All, therefore, is vanity but the love of God, and a life devoted to His will. He that loveth God with all his heart, fears neither death, nor judgment, nor hell, because “ perfect love casteth out fear,” and openeth a sure and immediate access to the divine presence. But it is no wonder that he, who still loves and delights in sin, should fear both death and judgment. Yet, if thou art not to be withheld from sin by the love of God, at least be restrained from it by fear ; for he that casts behind him the fear of an offended God, must run precipitately into every snare of the devil.

PART III.

“If the Gospel be true, it is a concern of such magnitude as should in all reason be paramount in our minds ; and the Gospel being indubitably and irrefragably true, its not being thus paramount implies the grossest and most irrational infatuation.”—ALEXANDER KNOX.

PART III.



The Object of the Gospel.

IF the object of the Gospel be to redeem men from iniquity, and purify a peculiar people, zealous of good works, the Divine Author of the plan must ever be looking for these, its solid results; and his gracious pleasure and approbation will be precisely in proportion as those results are realized. If, then, the method by which the divine apparatus works, is, to produce in the heart a vitally influential principle, which, like a soul within the soul, will actuate and guide the whole man, renovate his nature, and, by fixing his supreme love on God and goodness, and his supreme care on what is invisible and eternal, will make him instinctively pure, and spiritual, and godlike;—if this, I say, be the method, this principle must be the thing which God looks for in us, above everything else, and which, when found in us, as surely meets his loving approbation, as when he rested and was refreshed in the view of the new-born world.

Such we take to be the nature and grounds, as far as we can trace them, of St. Paul's divine philosophy

respecting justification and faith. Very many good people would start back from the view I am giving, as if I were setting up man's righteousness as the term of his acceptance. I well know I could not convince such ; but I am unmoved by their objections. For man's righteousness, in St. Paul's sense, is that which man can work for himself, by his own unassisted strength ; and God's righteousness is that which he works in us. It was the grand error of the Pharisees, and is still of their followers, to rely upon, and glory in, the one ; it is the leading point of the Gospel to call us to, and bless us with, the other ; and it is the beautiful characteristic of the evangelic philosophy to effect this result in a way consummately harmonizing with all the known laws of nature. A root of vital faith puts forth the main stem of divine love, and this sends forth two collateral stems of sobriety and charity ; these three branch into all possible dispositions to goodness, and become clothed, beautified and enriched with the foliage, the blossoms, and the fruits of pure and undefiled religion. Surely of this the Prophet spoke when he predicted that the Messiah "should see of the travail of his soul, and should be satisfied ;" for what else can satisfy divine benignity, but the substantial production of that spiritual life which alone capacitates for that spiritual happiness to which God has destined our nature, and to recover us to which, the Divine nature humbled itself, even to the death of the cross ?

The Great Design of the Gospel.

THE great design of God in the Gospel is to dispel the mist of sin and corruption with which we are surrounded; and to bring up his creatures out of the shadow of death into the region of light above, the land of truth and holiness. The great mystery of the Gospel is to establish in the hearts of men a godlike frame and disposition of spirit, which consists in righteousness and true holiness. And Christ, who is the great and mighty Saviour, came into the world on purpose, not only to save us from the pains of hell, but also to save us from our sins. Christ has therefore made an expiation of our sins by his death upon the cross, that we, being thus "delivered out of the hands of these our greatest enemies, might serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." This "grace of God that bringeth salvation," has therefore "appeared unto all men," in the Gospel, that it might "teach us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and that we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." "These things I write unto you," says the

Apostle, “that you sin not;” thus expressing the end of the whole Gospel, which is not to cover sin by spreading the purple robe of Christ’s death and sufferings over it, while it still remains in us, but to convey a powerful and mighty spirit of holiness, to cleanse us and free us from it. And this is a greater grace of God to us than the former, which still go both together in the Gospel; first, the free remission and pardon of sin in the blood of Christ, then, the delivering us from the power of sin, by the Spirit of Christ dwelling in our hearts.

Salvation by Faith.

SALVATION is not what is frequently understood by that word, the going to heaven, eternal happiness; it is not something at a distance, it is a present thing—a blessing which through the free mercy of God the Christian is now in possession of. It begins with what is usually termed “preventing grace;” including the first wish to please God, and the first dawn of light concerning his will, and the first slight transient conviction of having sinned against Him. All these imply some tendency towards life, some degree of salvation; the beginning of a deliverance from a blind, unfeeling heart, quite insensible of God and the things of God. Salvation consists in nothing less than a present de-

liverance from sin, a recovery of the divine nature, the renewal of our souls after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness ; in justice, mercy and truth. Now without faith we cannot thus be saved ; for we cannot rightly serve God unless we love him, neither can we know God but by faith : therefore salvation by faith is only, in other words, the love of God, by the knowledge of God ; or the true recovery of the image of God, by a spiritual acquaintance with him.

Would you be freed from the bondage of corruption ; would you grow in grace, in grace in general, or in grace in particular ? If you would, your way is plain ; ask from God more faith ; beg of him morning, noon, and night, while you walk by the way, while you sit in the house, when you lie down, and when you rise up ; beg of him, simply, to impress divine things more deeply on your heart,—to give you more and more of the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Salvation through Christ.

MOST of those who undertake to demonstrate the divine Being to ungodly persons, commonly begin with the works of nature, and they very rarely succeed. I do not mean to dispute the validity of these proofs,

which are consecrated by the Holy Scripture ; they are conformable to reason ; but very often they are not suited and proportioned to that disposition of mind which prevails in those for whom they are intended.

For we must observe that such discourses are not addressed to men who have a lively faith in their hearts, and who immediately discern that everything which exists is no more than the work of that God whom they adore. To these all nature proclaim its Author, and the heavens declare the glory of God. But as for those in whom this light is extinct, and in whom we endeavor to revive it, who are destitute of faith and charity, and who behold nothing but darkness and obscurity in nature, it does not seem the proper way to convert them, to point out to them, as proofs on this important subject, nothing more than the course of the moon, or the planets, or common arguments, against which they have constantly hardened themselves. The obduracy of their minds renders them deaf to this voice of nature, which has sounded continually in their ears ; and experience shows that so far from convincing them, by this method, nothing is so likely to discourage them and to make them despair of ever finding the truth, as to undertake to persuade them by this mode of reasoning, and to tell them that they must clearly see the truth of it.

It is not in this manner the Scripture speaks, which knows so much better than we do the things which are

of God. It informs us, indeed, that the beauty of the creatures makes known Him who is their Author; but it does not tell us that it does this to all persons in the world. On the contrary, it declares that whenever they do it, it is not by themselves, but by that light which God sheds abroad into the hearts of those to whom He discovers himself by their means. "That which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it to them." It teaches us, in general, that God is an invisible God. "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself." And that since the corruption of human nature He has left men in a state of blindness, from which they can only be delivered by Jesus Christ, without whom we are cut off from all communion with God. "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.

The Scripture also points this out to us, when it tells us, in so many places, that those who seek God find Him; for we do not speak thus of a thing which is evident and clear; men do not search after that,—it discovers itself, and compels observation.

The metaphysical proofs of a God are so very intricate, and abstracted from the common reasonings of men, that they strike them with but little force; and when they do affect some, it is only for the moment in which they discern the demonstration; but the very next hour they suspect they are deceived: "*Quod curiositate cognoverant superbia amiserunt.*"

Moreover, arguments of this kind can only lead us to a speculative knowledge of God ; and to know Him only thus is, in fact, not to know Him at all.

The Deity of Christians is not merely a God who is the Author of geometrical truths, and of the order of the elements : that is the divinity of the pagans. Nor is He merely a God who overrules by His providence the lives and fortunes of men, in order to give those who worship Him a happy series of years : this was the portion of the Jews. But the God of Abraham and of Jacob, the God of the Christians, is a God of love and consolation ; a God who fills the soul and the heart which he possesses ; gives it an inward feeling of its own misery, and of His infinite mercy ; unites Himself to the soul, replenishing it with humility and joy, with confidence and love ; and renders it incapable of fixing on anything but Himself as its ultimate object.

The God of the Christian is a God who makes the soul perceive that He is its only God ; that its only rest is in Him ; that it can have no joy but in His love ; and at the same time He causes it to abhor those obstacles which hinder and withhold it from loving Him with all its strength. Self-love and concupiscence, which do this, are insupportable to it. God makes it feel that there is this self-love deeply rooted within him, and that He alone can remove it.

This it is to know God as a Christian. But to know Him in this manner we must, at the same time, know

our own misery and unworthiness, and the need we have of a mediator in order to draw nigh to God and unite ourselves to Him. We must never separate these truths, because either by itself is not only unprofitable, but hurtful. The knowledge of God, without the knowledge of our own misery, produces pride. The knowledge of our own misery, without the knowledge of Jesus Christ, produces despair. But the knowledge of Jesus Christ exempts us both from pride and despair; because in him we see God, our own misery, and the only way of recovery from it.

We may know God without knowing our own miseries, or our own miseries without knowing God; or we may know both, without knowing the means of deliverance from the miseries which oppress us. But we cannot know Jesus Christ without at the same time knowing God, our own miseries, and the remedy for them: because Jesus Christ is not only God, but He is God the healer of our miseries.

Thus all who seek God without Jesus Christ find no light which can afford them satisfaction, or be really profitable to them. For either they do not go far enough to know that there is a God; or if they do, it is of no use to them, because they frame to themselves a way of communicating without a mediator with that God whom they have discovered without a mediator: so that they either fall into atheism or deism, two things which the Christian religion equally abhors.

We ought, therefore, wholly to direct our inquiries to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, since it is by Him alone that we can hope to know God in a manner that shall be really advantageous to us.

He is the true God to us men ; that is, to miserable and sinful creatures : He is the centre of all, and the object of all. He who knows not Him, knows nothing either in the order of the world, or in himself. For not only do we know nothing of God but by Jesus Christ ; but we know nothing of ourselves also but by Jesus Christ alone.

Without Jesus Christ man must remain in vice and in misery : with Jesus Christ man is released from vice and from misery also. In Him is all our happiness, our virtue, our life, our light, our hope ; and out of Him there is nothing but vice, misery, darkness, despair ; nothing but confusion appears in the nature of God, or in the nature of man.

The Cross of Christ.

THE cross is at once the Christian's portion and his treasure. By the cross of Christ, divine justice has been satisfied, and the load of man's debt cancelled ; and in the path of the cross disciples most frequently first meet with their Saviour, and are most generally through-

out their pilgrimage called to walk with him. As Christ expired on the cross for sin, so are his disciples in one sense called upon to tread in the path which he trod, by each taking up his own individual cross. In so doing for his sake, we shall find the richest reward of grace, viz., communion with him, and increase in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, in which the kingdom of God within consists; and which can only be enjoyed in proportion as our carnal affections are crucified.

It is by means of afflictions, spiritually endured, that Christians crucify their earthly affections and lusts, that the body of sin is destroyed, and their enemies are conquered. Truly may it be said, "*in hoc signo vinces.*" God, who knows all things, best knows the evil of our nature, and the tests the application of which gradually reveals to his children their latent and unsuspected evils, and affords the remedies and discipline they require. In proportion to the inclination of the natural man to evil, the path of the spiritual man must necessarily appear fraught with crosses; because the one is diametrically opposite to the other. Happy then is he, whom the Heavenly Father so hedges in, as not to suffer him to escape from beneath his chastening hand. There is no greater mark that God accounts us his children, than that he not only inflicts tribulation, but that he supports us under it, and walks with us through it. What we have to fear is not the cross, but

that we should be so unfortunate as not sufficiently to esteem its uses, to want grace to profit by it, and to reap the whole of the rich harvest which the harrow was intended to prepare. Great indeed is the spiritual darkness of that heart which does not feel thankful to God for treating it as he treated his own Son. It is indeed a miserable blindness to complain, when we ought rather to rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer for his sake. It is grieving the Holy Spirit to receive this great favor with sorrow and ingratitude; and lastly, nothing more certainly shows our indifference to the cross of Christ himself, than a disposition to reject the peculiar cross he offers to ourselves. He little prizes his Master who refuses conformity with him. The servant contemns his Lord who spurns his livery.

We wish to go to heaven; let us then walk diligently in the road that leads there. It is narrow, it is rugged, it is beset with thorns. It is impossible to enter it without violence to nature; it is equally impossible to persevere in it, without a perpetual crucifixion of the natural man; and without resolving by the grace of God to endure all sorts of afflictions, both from the constant contrariety of the path of grace to that of our own evil nature, and the enmity which from the very same cause is exercised by the children of this world against the children of God. Let us above all remember in the midst of our severest sufferings, that

whilst we seem to be the sport of the will of the wicked, they are in fact only the instruments used by measure in the hand of God to bring upon us that degree of suffering which he sees it necessary we should endure. He stands by the furnace; the flames may blaze, but he regulates the temperature; he says to the fierce flames of persecution, as to the billows of affliction, "Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further." Let us then generously submit ourselves with a willing heart to his fatherly correction. It has our true happiness in view, and let us never forget that God has an abundant right to exercise us by the heaviest trials he sees fit; since he has called us to an eternal weight of glory, which so infinitely transcends them.

Be then of good courage, be steadfast and immovable. The more rugged the path, the more clearly may we discern the prints of the footsteps of that Saviour who trod it before us, and the more means have we of bringing to our remembrance that we are the disciples of that Saviour, who was himself made perfect through sufferings. Nay, if trials even appear beyond our strength, let us not be dismayed, since he is then doubly engaged in weakness to become our strength, and to give us patience to endure and power to conquer.

O the depths of the wisdom and goodness of God! who hast not merely opened heaven to thy children by the cross, but who hast planted the path of

every one of them with such abundant crosses, that they may be continually reminded to look at their crucified Lord and live : and to turn away from the world in which is no trace of it. O what is the deceitfulness of the human heart ! The natural vanity even of disciples attaches itself to our present supposed good works, as it did formerly to our sins ; to our most holy exercises, as it did to our worldly accomplishments. Vanity is that taint of corruption, that pestilential breath of death, which infests every human thing ! Blessed be the path of the cross, which shows us our evils, and makes us distrust that self-complacency which destroys us.

Christ crucified.

WOULD we be wise ? in Christ crucified, is truth. There is not a deceit of the world, the flesh, or the devil, which is not here detected. The madness of pride, the folly of vanity, the infatuation of worldly reckonings and hope, appear what they are, when seen in the light of Christ's victorious patience, and unqualified meekness. In truth, there is not a moral evil which has not its infallible antidote, nor any moral virtue which has not its spring and sustenance, in Jesus Christ

and him Crucified. To apprehend Him, with every faculty of the mind, and with every affection of the heart, and to grow daily in that apprehension, is to emerge from everything that enthrals, to surmount all that could contaminate. The affectionate apprehension of Christ crucified, cannot but conform us more and more to his spirit; and to be conformed to his spirit, is to participate in his conquest: by hating what Christ hated, and loving what Christ loved, we not only die with him unto sin, but rise again with him unto righteousness; and, in the growth of this conformity, we ascend with him, more and more, into the heavens; and enter, with increasing depth and fulness, into the foretaste of that rest which remaineth for the people of God.

Faith.

As a reasonable, well-grounded faith is the highest perfection and supreme felicity of human nature in this imperfect state, so an unreasonable and obstinate belief is most destructive in its consequences to salvation. He is as sure to miss the mark at which he aims, who overshoots it, as he that shoots below it; and, perhaps, he is not less likely to fail of salvation, who over-believes, than he who believes too little, or does not believe at all; for,

though it is absolutely necessary to believe that Jesus Christ came into the world to be the Saviour of mankind, and that it is through his merits, propitiation, and intercession alone, that we can reasonably hope to be saved,—yet, if we think that he has so absolutely purchased salvation for us, as to disengage us from the obligation of our utmost obedience, and to release us from laboring and striving diligently, according to the utmost extent of our power, to serve and please the great God, to imitate his perfections, to exterminate, as far as possible, all sin and impurity out of our souls, and to be always renewing in them the almost worn-out traces of his glorious image,—he that has such an unreasonable, preposterous faith, will find himself as much wide of the mark in the affair of his salvation, as he that believes nothing relating to it. Such an unlimited mercy were rather to render us libertines, than make us free; it were to suppose that the infinitely pure God had purchased and given a liberty to those whom he was pleased to love and favor, of being as impure and vicious as they thought fit; which is the most notorious contradiction imaginable; since no reasonable man can conceive, that a being of an essence perfectly pure, can delight in perverse, polluted creatures of a nature entirely opposite to his own. Yet, after all, we must not pretend a title to the favor of God, from any virtue or purity of which we are capable; but having, to the utmost we are able, performed our duty, we must cast

ourselves wholly upon his mercy, through the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ our Saviour. For, it were a rash presumption to think that such a creature as man is, were capable of doing or being anything that could merit from the Deity; who bestows all things upon his indigent creatures, but who neither needs nor can receive anything from them; who accepts, indeed, our most imperfect praises and adoration, not flowing from ourselves, but from the influence and inspiration of his blessed Spirit in us, who is the Author of all our virtue, and by whose power alone it is that we are able to forego any vice.

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Where there is not a strong faith, there can be no love; where there is no love, there can be no desire; where there is no desire, there is no notion or conception of beauty; and, where there is no notion or conception of beauty, there can be no delight; and, by consequence, there is no beauty in that holiness which is not supported by faith, and pursued with delight. O grant me, my most adorable God, evermore to serve thee in the beauty of holiness; and give me all those graces and virtues which are necessary for so glorious, so sublime a performance!

The Marks of Faith.

I.

IN relation to faith, it is necessary seriously and impartially to consider what measures and degrees of it we have. For, since our eternal happiness depends upon our being possessed of this virtue, we cannot make too nice and diligent inquiries, what proportion of it we feel in ourselves. And to that end we are to consider whether there be anything that we fear, or love, more than God; whether his favor be the centre to which all our aims, designs, and desires tend; whether his displeasure is the evil which we most carefully and solicitously strive to avoid; whether our chief study be to know his divine will, and our constant labor, or rather delight, to perform it; whether any temptation, either of pleasure or gain, be capable of moving us to do an ill action; or whether the fear of any loss or mischief, either to our persons or estates, be capable of deterring us from perseverance in good ones: for, if we value estate, reputation, or life more than we hate sin and vice, and would be induced to commit the latter to save any of the former, it is demonstrable that we fear the loss of those things more than we fear God. And if we found ourselves capable of being tempted and allured, either by pleasure or profit, to do an unjust or vicious action, it is as plain that we love those things

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more than we love Him ; and the consideration of His favor and displeasure prevails upon us, then only, when nothing else comes in competition with them. But, if we find that we reject many things which otherwise we should choose ; that we despise many things which otherwise we should value ; that we refrain from many actions which otherwise we should have committed ; and do many others which else we should have avoided ; and all this only in regard to the favor or displeasure of God,—it is evident that we are actuated by the influence of a true and vigorous faith.

II.

Jesus Christ in His gospel has given this mark of those who have faith, that they shall speak a new language : and indeed a renovation of thoughts and desires causes that of conversation. These new things, which cannot be displeasing to God, as the old man cannot possibly please Him, are very different from the novelties of this world, because worldly things, how new soever they may be, grow old by continuance ; whereas this new disposition, the longer it continues, the more new it becomes. “Our outward man perisheth,” says St. Paul, “yet the inward man is renewed day by day ;” and it will only be completely new in eternity, when we shall sing without ceasing the new song, of which David speaks in his psalms, namely, the song inspired by the new spirit of charity.

Christ the Medium of Faith.

A MAN may have, while living out of Christ, yea, he must, he cannot choose but have a conviction within him that there is a God; and further he may have, even out of Christ, some kind of belief of those things that are spoken concerning God; but to repose on God as his God and his salvation, which is indeed to believe in Him, this cannot be but where Christ is the *medium* through which we look upon God; for so long as we look upon God through our own guiltiness, we can see nothing but His wrath, and apprehend him as an armed enemy; and therefore are so far from resting on Him, as our happiness, that the more we view it, it puts us upon the more speed to fly from Him, and to cry out, "Who can dwell with everlasting burnings, and abide with a consuming fire?" But our Saviour, taking sin out of the way, puts himself betwixt our sins and God, and so makes a wonderful change of our apprehension of Him. When you look through a red glass, the whole heavens seem bloody; but through pure uncolored glass you receive the clear light that is so refreshing and comfortable to behold. When sin unpardoned is betwixt, and we look on God through that, we can perceive nothing but anger and enmity in his countenance; but make Christ once the *medium*, our pure Redeemer, and through him, as clear, transparent glass, the beams

of God's favorable countenance shine in upon the soul. The Father cannot look upon his well-beloved Son, but graciously and pleasingly. God looks on us out of Christ, sees us rebels, and fit to be condemned: we look on God as being just and powerful to punish us; but when Christ is betwixt, God looks on us in him as justified, and we look on God in him as pacified, and see the smiles of His favorable countenance. Take Christ out, all is terrible; interpose him, all is full of peace.

Acts of Faith.

IN every action reflect upon the end; and in your undertaking it, consider why you do it, and what you propound to yourself for a reward, and to your action as its end.

Begin every action in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; the meaning of which is: that we be careful that we do not the action without the permission or warrant of God: that we design it to the glory of God, if not in the direct action, yet at least in its consequence; if not in the particular, yet at least in the whole order of things and accidents: that it be so blessed, that what you intend for innocent and holy purposes may not by any chance, or abuse, or misun-

derstanding of men, be turned into evil, or made the occasion of sin.

Let every action of concernment be begun with prayer, that God would not only bless the action, but sanctify your purpose; and make an oblation of the action to God: holy and well-intended actions being the best oblations and presents we can make to God; and, when God is entitled to them, he will the rather keep the fire upon the altar bright and shining.

In the prosecution of the action, renew and re-ignite your purpose by short ejaculations to these purposes: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name let all praise be given:" and consider, "Now I am working the work of God; I am his servant, I am in a happy employment, I am doing my Master's business, I am not at my own dispose, I am using his talents, and all the gain must be his:" for then be sure, as the glory is his, so the reward shall be thine. If thou bringest his goods home with increase, he will make thee ruler over cities.

Have a care that, while the altar thus sends up a holy fume, thou dost not suffer the birds to come and carry away the sacrifice: that is, let not that which began well, and was intended for God's glory, decline and end in thy own praise or temporal satisfaction, or a sin; be watchful lest this goodly head of gold descend in silver and brass, and end in iron and clay, like Nebuchadnezzar's image; for from the end it shall have its name and reward.

In every more solemn action of religion join together many good ends, that the consideration of them may entertain all your affections; and that when any one ceases, the purity of your intentions may be supported by another supply. He that fasts only to tame a rebellious body, when he is provided of a remedy either in grace or nature, may be tempted to leave off fasting. But he that in his fast intends the mortification of every unruly appetite, and accustoming himself to bear the yoke of the Lord, a contempt of the pleasures of meat and drink, humiliation of all wilder thoughts, obedience and humility, austerity and charity, and the convenience and assistance to devotion, and to do an act of repentance; whatever happens, will have reason enough to make him to continue his purpose, and to sanctify it. And certain it is, the more good ends are designed in an action, the more degrees of excellency the man obtains.

If any temptation to spoil your purpose happens in a religious duty, do not presently omit the action, but rather strive to rectify your intention, and to mortify the temptation. St. Bernard taught us this rule; for when the devil, observing him to preach excellently and to do much benefit to his hearers, tempted him to vain-glory, hoping that the good man, to avoid that, would cease preaching, he gave this answer only, "I neither began for thee, neither for thee will I make an end."

In all your actions which are of long continuance, deliberation, and abode, let your holy and pious intention be actual ; that is, that it be, by a special prayer or action, by a peculiar act of resignation or oblation, given to God ; but in smaller actions, and little things and indifferent, fail not to secure a pious habitual intention ; that is, that it be included within your general care, that no action have an ill end ; and that it be comprehended in your general prayers, whereby you offer yourself and all you do to God's glory.

Christianity and Prayer of the Heart.

* * * TRUE Christianity does not consist in specific views presented to the mind, or warmly apprehended by the mind, however subservient, in certain cases, and among certain classes, sensations of this kind may be to its attainment. True Christianity consists in such an affectionate sense of the Divine realities made known by the Gospel, as produces in us "a right spirit" and "a clean heart:" it consists in a mind supremely and predominantly occupied with spiritual objects, and seeking its chief happiness, and finding its deepest rest, in God ; daily and hourly drawing down grace from heaven, by the prayer of the heart, and guarding every degree of grace received by unremitting vigilance over conduct, temper, and thought.

We cannot give to ourselves this religion; for "every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above." Therefore says St. James, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God." In prayer, then, true religion begins; and in prayer, more than anything else, it is exercised until "mortality" is "swallowed up of life."

In proportion as the mind becomes devout and spiritual, prayer will be felt not merely a duty, but our happiest resource, and truest means of refreshment. By this feeling, especially, may we measure our advance in religion. Until something of this feeling is found in us, we ought not to think ourselves religious; when we really possess it, it will be the guide of our conduct, as well as the solace of our heart; for it will instinctively teach us to avoid whatever might obstruct, or damp our habitual commerce with heaven.

He who pursues this course will be led as God sees best for him; and he will gradually gain the surest knowledge of Holy Scripture, through the teaching of the heart.

Prayer.

I.

LET it be well observed, that whensoever the Scripture speaks of prayer, whensoever it uses that term, or other terms equivalent to it, it means prayer, sincere

and earnest, in the full and proper sense of these words, prayer proceeding from the heart and soul. It does not mean any particular form of words whatever ; it does not mean any service of the lips, any utterance or pronounciation of prayer, merely as such, but supplication actually and truly proceeding from the heart. Prayer may be solemn without being sincere. Every decency, every propriety, every visible mark and token of prayer may be present, yet the heart not engaged. This is the requisite which must make prayer availing : this is the requisite, indeed, which must make it that which the Scripture means whenever it speaks of prayer. Every outward act of worship, without this participation of the heart, fails, not because men do not pray sincerely, but because, in Scripture sense, they do not pray at all.

II.

A man may pray night and day, and yet deceive himself ; but no man can be assured of his sincerity, who does not pray. Prayer is faith passing into act ; a union of the will and the intellect realizing in an intellectual act. It is the whole man that prays. Less than this is wishing or lip-work ; a charm or a mumery. *Pray always*, says the Apostle ;—that is, have the habit of prayer, turning your thoughts into acts by connecting them with the idea of the redeeming God, and even so reconverting your actions into thoughts.

III.

Every petition of a good man is heard and regarded by HIM who holds the reins of nature in his hands. When God, from his throne of celestial glory, issues out that uncontrollable demand, to which all events are subject, even your desires, humble, pious Christians, are not overlooked by him. The good man's prayer is among the reasons by which the Omnipotent is moved in the administration of the universe.

How little is all earthly greatness! How low and impotent the proudest monarch, if compared with the poorest person in the world, that leads but a good life! For their influence, even in their highest prosperity, is only among weak men, like themselves: and, not seldom, their designs are blasted from Heaven, for the insolence of those that formed them: . . . *Is not this great Babylon that I have built, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty? . . .* While the word was on the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, The kingdom is departed from thee. But the poor man's prayer pierceth the clouds: and, weak and contemptible as he seems, he can draw down the host of heaven, and even the Almighty in his defence, so long as he is able only to utter his wants, or can but turn the thought of his heart to God!

The Habit of Prayer.

“PRAY without ceasing,” may very well be interpreted according to the literal meaning. For, if the soul can once get an absolute dominion over its passions, keeping continually a strict guard over them; if it be always duly prepared, and have in their just degrees all the requisites of prayer, which are faith, repentance, love, humility, obedience, thankfulness, resignation, charity, and sincerity; though the man be not always upon his knees, yet, his conversation will in such a manner be in heaven, his soul will be so abstracted from the world, as to be almost continually exercising itself, in some act either of praise, petition, or adoration of God. Which, no doubt, his infinite goodness will accept as an incessant prayer, though it be not accompanied with all the outward circumstances of devotion: which, to be sure, will not be neglected either by such a one at proper seasons. And, in reality, a formal and customary kneeling, a lifting up the hands and eyes to heaven without the heart, a cold and careless uttering of words, are but the dead carcass of prayer. The life of it consists in the combination of the forementioned qualifications, without which it can neither be satisfactory to a wise man, nor, it is to be feared, acceptable to the Almighty God.

Fasting and Prayer.

“If faith be sufficient,” one may say, “what need of fasting?” Because, together with our faith, that also brings no small power. For it both implants much strictness, and of a man makes one an angel, and fights against the incorporeal powers: yet not by itself, but prayer too is needed, and prayer must come first. See how many blessings spring from them both. For he that is praying as he ought, and fasting, hath not many wants, cannot be covetous; he that is not covetous, will be also more disposed to almsgiving. He that fasts is light and winged, and prays with wakefulness, and quenches his wicked lusts, and is reconciled to God, and humbles his soul when lifted up. Therefore even the Apostles were almost always fasting. He that prays with fasting hath his wings double, and lighter than the very winds. For neither doth he gape, nor stretch himself, nor grow torpid in prayer, as is the case with most men, but is more vehement than fire, and rises above the earth. For nothing is mightier than a man who prays sincerely. For if a woman had power to prevail with a savage ruler, one neither fearing God, nor regarding man; much more will he prevail with God, who is continually waiting upon Him, and controlling his appetite, and casting out luxury. But if thy body be too weak to fast continually,

still it is not too weak for prayer, nor without vigor for contempt of the appetite. For although thou canst not fast, yet canst thou avoid luxurious living; and even this is no little thing, nor far removed from fasting, for luxury and drunkenness is both the fountain and parent of all our evils.

The Operations of the Holy Spirit.

THE efficacy of the Spirit is to be judged of by its fruits. Its immediate effects are upon the disposition. A visible outward conduct will ensue, but the true seat of grace, and of spiritual energy, is in the heart and inward disposition. Whenever, therefore, we find religious carelessness succeeded within us by religious seriousness; conscience, which was silent or unheard, now powerfully speaking and obeyed; sensuality and selfishness, the two grand enemies of salvation, the two great powers of darkness, which rule the natural man; when we find even these giving way to the inward accusing voice of conscience; when we find the thoughts of the mind drawing or drawn more and more toward heavenly things; the value and interest of these expectations plainer to our view, a great deal more frequent than heretofore in our meditations, and more

fully discerned ; the care and safety of our souls rising gradually above concerns and anxieties about worldly affairs ; when we find the force of temptation and of evil propensities, not extinct but retreating before a sense of duty ; self-government maintained ; the interruption of it immediately perceived, bitterly deplored, and soon recovered ; sin rejected and repelled ; and this not so much with an increase of confidence in our strength as of reliance upon the assisting grace of God ; when we find ourselves touched with the love of our Maker, taking satisfaction in his worship and service ; when we feel a growing taste and relish for religious subjects and religious exercises : above all, when we begin to rejoice in the comfort of the Holy Ghost ; in the prospect of reaching heaven ; in the powerful aids and helps which are given us in accomplishing this great end, and the strength, and firmness, and resolution which, so helped and aided, we experienced in our progress : when we feel these things, then may we without enthusiasm or superstition, humbly believe that the Spirit of God hath been at work within us. External virtues, good actions, will follow, as occasions may draw them forth ; but it is *within* that we must look for the change which the inspiration of God's Spirit produces.

The Fruits of the Holy Spirit.

POPULAR theology is sometimes strikingly marked by inattention to the doctrine of the HOLY SPIRIT. Far be it from me to undervalue those advantages which the SON OF GOD has purchased for all mankind ; yet it is perilous to withdraw our attention from the inestimable blessings which the Holy Spirit bestows ; blessings which come home to the bosom of the individual, and which improve salvability into salvation. That spirit of life which God breathed into Adam, when he made him in his image ; that Spirit, whom our creed calls “the Lord and Giver of life,” is now ready to come and take up his abode with us. By Him we may be enabled to renew within our hearts a spiritual paradise, where all things shall be redeemed from the primæval curse, and man may once more go forth to meet his Lord without terror and without reluctance. To have the devotional temper made the prevailing disposition of the soul ; to have God in all our thoughts ; and whether we eat, or whether we drink, or whatever we do, to do all to the glory of God ; not to be afraid, though HE hear our conversation ; not to be ashamed, though HE search our hearts ; to have confidence in HIM, the author of all good, and the sweetener of all evil ; to be impressed with a vigilant and cheerful sense of His omnipotence ; to see HIM in his works, and in

the works of his creatures ; and to feel persuaded, that neither mountains, nor perils, nor famine, nor the sword, can separate us from the love of God ; . . . these are the fruits of the Spirit : this is the duty, indeed, of all men ; but it is the high and glorious privilege of the advanced and established Christian. By this faith, the just man lives. This hope is the anchor of his soul. The truth has made him free, and he stands erect in the liberty of the Gospel. He rejoices that he is here but as a stranger and a pilgrim, and that his home is with Christ in the heavens. He feels the graciousness of that adorable Being who, when he would compress into a single word the essence of his adorable 'perfections, inspired an apostle to proclaim to us that God is LOVE.

Justification.

I.

It is one thing for God to justify us, i. e., to pardon our sins, and account us righteous, and his children ; and another for us to know, or be assured that He does so. If we inquire after the former, it is plain that no man can be accounted righteous by God till he really is so : and when the man is sanctified throughout in spirit, soul and body ; then is he certainly justified, and not till then. This is confessed by all except anti-

nomians ; and whatever difference there is amongst Christians in this matter, it lies only in the forms and variety of expression. They that contend earnestly for the necessity of good works, cannot imagine that the works are holy before the heart is so ; for as is the fountain, such will be its streams ; as is the tree, such will be its fruits. What absurdity then is there in admitting that men are justified before they bring forth good works till they be sanctified and changed ? On the other hand, they who contend so earnestly for justification by faith without works, do not only suppose that the man is thoroughly changed by the infusion of habitual grace, but also that this grace, as soon as it has opportunity, will exert and express itself in good works : and they readily acknowledge, that the faith which does not work by love, is an unhistorical, unanimated faith. And, if so, how natural is it to comprise in that holiness which justifies, not only the change of the heart, but of the actions ? But here it is well worth considering, whether the thorough change in the nature of a sinner, which is called holiness, be now effected at once and in a moment, and not rather gradually and in time ? for this may give some light to the doctrine of justification, and draw us off from speculations and theories to more useful and practical thoughts and discourses about it. It is true, in the primitive times, when the conviction of a sinner was wrought by a dazzling light, by surprising miracles, by exuberant

influxes of the Spirit, and the concurrence of many extraordinary things, sanctification (as in the jailer and his family, Acts xvi.) might be begun and finished in the same hour. But it is rarely so at the present day; our vices are not so suddenly subdued, nor our virtues so suddenly implanted. Our convictions, in the beginning of conversion, are seldom so full and clear as theirs: and, if we may judge by the effects, it is but seldom that the principle of a new life is infused in the same purity and power it appears to have been in them.

In the first plantation of the Gospel, men being converted, as it were, in a moment, ingrafted by baptism into Christ, and receiving the Holy Ghost, the earnest of their justification or acceptance with God, and their future glory, we may very well say of them, that they were not only justified, but also knew themselves to be so, before they had brought forth any other fruit of righteousness than what was implied in the dedication of themselves to Christ by that solemn rite of baptism; but, at this day, when conversion is not effected in the same manner; when faith and good works do mutually cherish one another; when righteousness is not brought forth into victory, but by long labor and travail; it is evident that faith and good works may be pronounced jointly and antecedently necessary to our justification. Why God cannot produce in us those strong dispositions to virtue in a moment, which are naturally produced by time; or why we may not

ascribe as much efficacy to infused grace, as philosophers are wont to do to repeated acts, I cannot see; nor can I see why such dispositions, when infused, may not be called habits, if they have all the properties and effects of a habit. And that such excellent dispositions were suddenly wrought in the minds of Christians in the beginning of Christianity, is too plain from the history of those times to need a proof; but that such changes are ordinarily effected at this day, there is sufficient reason to deny.

As our progress to sanctification must be slower than formerly, as it must be longer before the grace that is infused so far master our corruption, and dilate and diffuse itself through our whole nature, as that we may be justly denominated holy and righteous from the prevalence of this holy principle: so by a necessary consequence, our justification must commence later. But, after all, I know not why we should be so inquisitive after the time of our justification by God. The comfort of a Christian does not result immediately from God's justifying him, but from knowing that he does so. The true and solid proof of the sanctification of the heart, is sanctity of life. If I be holy, God, who cannot err, will certainly account me so; and if I cease to be so, God must cease to account me so. Let no one, from some passionate resolutions, or sudden changes of his own mind, be tempted to conclude too hastily of his being justified, as if the change wrought in him

were equal to that commonly effected in the first converts of Christianity ; for even these were not justified, unless they did profess Christ with the mouth, as well as believe in him with the heart ; and this public profession in those days was equivalent to many good works in these.

II.

There are two kinds of Christian righteousness ; the one without us,—which we have by imputation ; the other in us,—which consisteth of faith, hope, charity, and other Christian virtues. And St. Paul doth prove, that Abraham had not only the one, because the thing believed was imputed unto him for righteousness,—but also the other, because he offered up his son. God giveth us both the one justice and the other : the one, by accepting us for righteous in Christ ; the other by working Christian righteousness in us. The proper and most immediate efficient cause in us of this latter, is the Spirit of adoption we have received into our hearts. That whereof it consisteth—whereof it is really and formally made—are those infused virtues, proper and particular unto Saints, which the Spirit, in the very moment when first it is given of God, bringeth with it ; the effects whereof are such actions as the Apostle doth call the fruits of works, the operations of the Spirit. The difference of the which operations from the root whereof they spring, maketh it needful to put two kinds.

likewise, of sanctifying righteousness,—habitual and actual: habitual, that holiness wherewith our souls are inwardly indued, the same instant when first we begin to be the Temples of the Holy Ghost; actual, that holiness which afterwards beautifieth all the parts and actions of our life;—the holiness for the which Enoch, Job, Zachary, Elizabeth, and other Saints, are in the Scriptures so highly commended.

If it be here demanded, which of these we do first receive? I answer, that the Spirit,—the virtues of the Spirit,—the habitual justice which is ingrafted,—the external justice of Jesus Christ which is imputed,—these we receive all at one and the same time; whensoever we have any of these, we have all; they go together. Yet, since no man is justified except he believe; and no man believeth except he have faith; and no man, except he have received the Spirit of adoption, hath faith; forasmuch as they do necessarily infer justification, and justification doth, of necessity, presuppose them; we must needs hold that imputed righteousness—in dignity being the chiefest—is, notwithstanding, in order the last of these: but actual righteousness, which is the righteousness of good works, succeedeth all, followeth after all, both in order and time.

Justification by Faith.

ST. PAUL'S strongest argument for justification by faith is the case of Abraham ; and, in stating this case, he uses the utmost care to show that Abraham's faith involved in it the very noblest moral qualities (Rom. iv. 18-21). And having enumerated these, he expressly adds, "and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." What is this but to assert, that because the patriarch's faith was, in its very nature, the essence of all genuine righteousness, the happy possessor of it could not fail to be accepted of Him who need not wait for outward proofs, inasmuch as he reads the heart. The works, then, that St. Paul excludes from our justification, are self-wrought works, such as man can perform by his own natural power (all which he wholly depreciates, and accounts dross), and, also, all outward works ; as, of previous necessity, the plan of divine mercy being to accept every one, however, till then, ungodly, in whom that right disposition of heart, called forth, comes into existence.

In the xi. article of the English Church, the words are, "We are counted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not of our own works and deservings." In the article next following we are told, that good works spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith ; it shows

that what God requires in us, in order to acceptance, is, indeed, the essential spirit of all moral excellence. The inference, on the whole, is, that justification (or acceptance with God) "is," most essentially, connected with moral obedience: "this," being the work of God (that is the highest possible exercise of moral obedience), "that we believe on him whom He hath sent."

But will not this make our acceptance depend on our own works, which is so emphatically and repeatedly denied? Certainly not: I mean in any sense which maintainers of the doctrine of grace are called on to deny. Our own works are what we can perform by our own power; but faith is that action of the mind which we can only be raised to by the almighty power of God: to say, then, that our acceptance depends upon our faith, is only to affirm that God makes us what He would have us to be before he takes any pleasure in us. As in the creation of the world, God first said "Let there be light," and then, when light had risen at his command, "saw the light that it was good;" so God first brings light out of darkness, and order out of confusion in the human heart, and then blesses his own work, as in creation. The penitent, who has learned the true way of salvation, does not work, as if that were to do him any good; but pray: to ask from God what he feels he cannot himself take one effectual step toward, being all that he conceives in his power. He, in the meantime, faithfully endeavors to work; but, instead of

hoping to make himself better, he can scarcely persuade himself that he does not daily grow worse. Therefore, the effectual grace of God is what he looks for ; and every symptom of deepening devotion, of increased strength, of growing love to God and goodness, is wholly ascribed to that great source, and rejoiced in as entirely proceeding "from the mercy seat above." When consolation thus begins to be felt by him, its ground is in no respect what he has done, it is wholly what God has wrought in him. To God's mercy in Christ, then, and the grace of the Spirit through him, he ascribes all his salvation and all his happiness. Nor is he curious to ask by what terms of art the theory of this mercy and grace may be most exactly stated : the possession of the substance brings to him at once the sure pledge of God's love, and of his own felicity, both here and hereafter. He has no trouble from speculative doubts, and he has no taste for subtilties. He is most grateful for God's inestimable love in the redemption of the world by his Son ; but the emphasis of his joy and gratitude is, that instead of merely viewing that transaction as giving him security against God's wrath and a title to heaven, he feels himself, individually, in possession of its substantial results : he who died for him, also lives, in the noblest sense, in him ; and the heaven he looks forward to, is already begun in his heart.

This view of justification by faith is that which is

maintained throughout the New Testament, and would soon appear, if the Holy Scriptures were once read with an unbiassed and a consecutive attention. It would be seen that, wherever faith is spoken of, its moral efficacy is that which is dwelt upon; and its peculiarly moral nature, that which gives it such special ascendancy among the Christian graces. We say its peculiarly moral nature, for what is faith but a radical rightness of mind and heart towards God, which secures our entire acquiescence in every manifestation of the Divine will; makes God, practically, our chief good, and moral goodness the very element which we breathe; that is, in proportion as it (faith) prevails in us? This is clearly St. Paul's view of Abraham's faith, "as imputed to him for righteousness:" and this is the idea expanded and exemplified in that most noble xi. chapter of Hebrews. And faith in Christ only differs from this as a higher exercise of the same grace differs from a lower; for what is faith in Christ but the radical rightness mentioned above, rising superior to still greater discouragements than even those of Abraham, recognizing its glorious object in the form of a servant and a sufferer; and though the Divine perspicacity of its discernment, and the happy soundness of its taste, discovering in the reproach of Christ—in that which he submitted to, and, consequently, in that which is to be submitted to for him—a glory and a blessedness, in comparison with which earthly honors and acquirements sink into folly and baseness?

Such, clearly, was the faith which our blessed Lord gave such high praise to in the centurion. With what exquisite fitness did our Saviour, on that occasion, declare, that "many should come from the east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," &c., when he saw before him so perfect an exemplification of Abraham's own spirit; the centurion's confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ being exactly of the same generous, powerful, unlimited kind, with the confidence of Abraham in the Almighty Father. "They," says St. Paul, "which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham." Need we ask, whether the epithet of *faithful* here does not describe Abraham's moral character? But if so, the faith which constitutes a likeness to him, and is the ground of being blessed with him, must be a moral quality, and, of course, an exercise of obedience to the moral law.

"How," says our Saviour, "can ye believe, who seek honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God only?" Than these words, what can be a stronger proof of the believing here spoken of being a moral disposition of the sublimest kind, since our Lord, in these expressions, makes it to imply, essentially, both the most heroic dereliction and the most spiritual preference that could be made by man in this world?

When, therefore, our Redeemer used these words, and when he gave that eulogium to the centurion, did

he not evidently value faith as a moral quality, and not only as being a moral quality itself, but as supposing or implying the essential principles of all moral excellence, as far as is attainable by man? Is not, then, our Lord's method of estimating while on earth, our surest standard for his estimating now, in his spiritual kingdom? and, consequently, must we not infer, that the faith which he most highly approved then, is the faith which he will most certainly reckon for righteousness now?—that, as he then valued faith on moral grounds, nothing can be more certain than that he so appreciates it still, He being “the same yesterday, to-day, and forever?”

The Peace of God.

I.

FROM our sense of reconciliation with God, arises that which is our inward peace, a calm and quiet temper of mind. This peace which we have with God in Christ, is inviolable; but because the sense and persuasion of it may be interrupted, the soul that is truly at peace with God may for a time be disquieted in itself, through weakness of faith, or the strength of temptation, or the darkness of desertion, losing sight of that

grace, that love and light of God's countenance, on which its tranquillity and joy depend." "Thou didst hide thy face," saith David, "and I was troubled." But when these eclipses are over, the soul is revived with new consolation, as the face of the earth is renewed and made to smile with the return of the sun in the spring: and this ought always to uphold Christians in the saddest times, viz., that the grace and love of God towards them depend not on their sense, nor upon anything in them, but is still in itself incapable of the smallest alteration.

It is natural to men to desire their own peace, the quietness and contentment of their minds; but most men miss the way to it, and therefore find it not; for there is no way to it, indeed, but this one, wherein few seek it, viz., reconciliation and peace with God. The persuasion of that alone makes the mind clear and serene, like your fairest summer days. "My peace I give you," saith Christ, "not as the world. Let not your hearts be troubled." All the peace and favor of the world cannot calm a troubled heart; but where this peace is which Christ gives, all the trouble and disquiet of the world cannot disturb it. "When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation or a man only." All outward distress to a mind thus at ease, is but as the rattling of the hail upon the tiles to him that sits within the house at a

sumptuous feast. A good conscience is styled a feast, and with an advantage which no other feast can have, nor, were it possible, could men endure it. A few hours of feasting will weary the most professed epicure; but a conscience thus at peace is a *continual feast*, with continual unwearied delight. What makes the world take up such a prejudice against religion as a sour, unpleasant thing? They see the afflictions and griefs of Christians, but they do not see their joys, the inward pleasure of mind that they can possess in a very hard estate. Have you not tried other ways enough? Hath not he tried them who had more ability and skill for it than you, and found them not only “vanity” but “vexation of spirit?” If you have any belief of holy truth, put but this once upon the trial, seek peace in the way of grace. This inward peace is too precious a liquor to be poured into a filthy vessel. A holy heart that gladly entertains grace, shall find that it and peace cannot dwell asunder. An ungodly man may sleep to death in the lethargy of carnal presumption and impenitency; but a true, lively, solid peace, he cannot have.

II.

The peace of God being what we often pray for, and earnestly desire, ought, so far as possible, to be understood, in order to be more earnestly coveted, and

surely possessed. For that in which it is said to pass all understanding, is the invaluable advantage and delight with which it is constantly attended ; and not that it is so unintelligible a thing as not possibly to be apprehended by us : since that which, in a great degree, we are capable of feeling, we are, in some measure, capable of understanding. This blessing is prayed for, that we may have the unspeakable comfort of feeling it ; and indeed, there is no understanding it but by feeling it. But, though we may comprehend enough of its value to make it infinitely desirable, yet the utmost extent of it, as far surpasses our understanding, as the blessings which precede and follow it ; which are the favor of God, and the inconceivable bliss that accompanies the eternal enjoyment of Him. Therefore, let us never cease our endeavors to know as much, nor relax our petitions to our gracious God to make us feel as much, of this blessed peace—a peace which all the power, wealth, and glory of this world, can never give—as He of his infinite tender mercy, shall think fit to bestow upon us. It is natural that the word peace should put us in mind of its contrary, war ; since peace arises from the conclusion of war, and from the cessation of strife and combat : and that there is a contest in the soul of man, between reason and passion, wisdom and folly, virtue and vice, is too evident to need proof. And it is as plain, that wheresoever there is strife and contention, there must be trouble and disorder : therefore, the

agitated mind must needs be perplexed and restless, so long as this intestine war continues, and till there be a complete victory gained on one side or other. If vice and passion absolutely prevail, the contest indeed will be at an end, but it will be a wretched termination; and such a peace only will ensue, as will suffer those outrageous enemies to tyrannize without opposition or control; a peace fatal to the soul, debarring it from any future hopes of liberty and happiness. But, if it please the all-merciful, as well as all-powerful God, to succor man's weak reason and virtue, engaged in this doubtful and dangerous conflict, and so to illuminate the one, and strengthen the other, as to give them an entire victory,—then, he crowns the transported soul with his divine peace, the joy and comfort of which as much surpass all expression, as its infinite benefit and blessing surpass all understanding; which peace, most gracious God, grant us evermore, we beseech thee, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Peace of Mind.

THE first two things to be sought after, in order to the acquiring of a settled calmness and undisturbed pleasure of mind, are a constant and fervent love of the

adorable God, and a real and entire contempt of the world. Now, the love of God will certainly flow from a frequent and serious contemplation of his continual and unspeakable goodness; as the contempt of the world will undoubtedly ensue from a reasonable and impartial consideration of its worthlessness. These are the necessary foundation upon which alone may be built that noble, beautiful, and desirable structure of an intrepid, virtuous, and peaceful mind: the only valuable treasure upon earth; and that alone, of which we may be innocently covetous; a dominion more glorious than all the empires of the world; in the pursuit after which alone ambition is justifiable. O my God, possess my soul with such an ardent love of thee, so buoyant above all other affections, that no one may ever come in competition with it; such a love as may not only subdue all other affections, but purify and make them innocent; such a love as may create in my soul a perpetual pleasure in the contemplation of Thee, and a continual thirst after Thee, never to be quenched, but by the fullness of enjoyment; a love, which may transport my soul with thy divine perfections, and paint there such lively images, such bright ideas of thy glorious Majesty, that none of the trifling pleasures and temptations of this world may be able to make on it the least impression. And as, my gracious Lord, thou hast given me much, and forgiven me much, so raise my love to a degree proportionable to thy bounty and mercy.

The Fear of God.

THERE is a secret, but most certain truth, that highly improveth that wisdom, which the fear of the Lord bringeth, and that is this: That those who truly fear God, have a secret guidance, from a higher wisdom than what is barely human; namely, by the spirit of truth and wisdom, that doth really and truly, but secretly, prevent and direct them. And let no one think that this is a piece of fanaticism. Any man, that, sincerely and truly, fears Almighty God, relies upon him, calls upon him for his guidance and direction, hath it, as really, as the son hath the counsel and direction of his father. And, though the voice be not audible, nor the direction always perceptible to sense, yet, it is equally as real, as if a man heard the voice saying, *This is the way, walk in it.*

Redemption of Time.

WHATEVER you do, be careful to retain in your heart a habit of religion, that may be always about you, and keep your heart, and your life, always as in God's presence, and tending towards Him. This will be con-

tinually with you, and put itself into acts, even although you are not in a solemn posture of religious worship; and will lend you multitudes of religious applications to Almighty God, upon all occasions and interventions; which will not at all hinder you in your secular occasions, but better and further you. It will make you faithful in your calling, even on account of an actual reflection of your mind upon the presence and command of the God, whom you both fear and love. It will make you thankful for all successes and supplies; temperate and sober in all your natural actions; just and faithful in all your dealings; patient and contented in all your disappointments and crosses; and actually consider and intend his honor, in all that you do; and it will give a tincture of devotion to all your secular employments, and turn those actions which are materially civil and natural, into the very true nature of religion, and make your whole life an uninterrupted life of religion and duty to God. For, this habit of piety in your soul will not only not lie sleeping and inactive, but, almost in every hour of the day, will put forth exertions of itself, in short occasional prayers, thanksgivings, dependence, and resort unto that God who is always near you, and lodgeth, in a manner, in your heart, by his fear, and love, and habitual religion towards him. By this means you do effectually, and in the best and readiest manner imaginable, *redeem* your time. This is the great art of Christian chemistry,

whereby the whole course of this life becomes a service to Almighty God, an uninterrupted state of religion, the best, and noblest, and most universal REDEMPTION OF TIME.

The Sabbath.

I HAVE, by long and sound experience, found, that the due observance of this day, and of the duties of it, has been of great advantage to me. God Almighty is the Lord of our time, and lends it to us: and, as it is but just we should consecrate this part of that time to him, so I have found, by a strict and diligent observation, that a due observance of this day, hath ever been joined to it, a blessing upon the rest of my time; and the week that hath been so begun, hath been blessed and prosperous to me. And, on the other side, when I have been negligent of this day, the rest of the week has been unhappy, and unsuccessful to my own secular employments: so that I could easily make an estimate of my successes in my own secular employments of the week following, by the manner of my passing this day. And this I do not write lightly or inconsiderately, but upon a long and sound observation and experience.

Holiness.

LET us not think holiness in the hearts of men, here, in the world, is a forlorn, forsaken, and outcast thing from God, and that he hath no regard for holiness; wherever it is, though never so small, if it be but hearty and sincere, it can no more be cut off and discontinued from God, than a sunbeam here upon earth can be broken off from its intercourse with the sun, and be left alone amidst the mire and dirt of this world. The sun may as well discard its own rays, and banish them from itself into some region of darkness, far remote from it, where they shall have no dependence upon it—as God can forsake and abandon holiness in the world, and leave it a poor orphan thing that shall have no influence from Him to preserve and keep it. Holiness, wherever it be, is something of God; it is an efflux from him, that always hangs upon him, and lives in him: as the sunbeams, although they gild this lower world, and spread their golden wings over us, yet they are not so much here, where they shine, as in the sun from whence they flow. God cannot draw a curtain between himself and holiness, which is nothing but the splendour and shining of himself; he cannot hide his face from it; he cannot desert it in the world. He that is born in God, shall overcome the world, and the prince of this world too, by the power of God in him.

Holiness is no solitary neglected thing ; it has stronger confederacies, greater alliances, than sin and wickedness. It is in league with God and the universe ; the whole creation smiles upon it : there is something of God in it, and therefore it must needs be a victorious and triumphant thing.

Holiness is never alone in the world : God is always with it, and his loving Spirit ever associates and joins itself to it. He, that sent it into the world, is with it, as Christ speaketh of himself : “ The Father hath not left me alone, because I do always those things that please him.” Holiness is the life of God, which, where-soever it is, he cannot but feed and maintain : and, as devils are always active to encourage evil, so we cannot imagine but that the heavenly host of blessed angels above are busily employed in the promoting of that which they love best, that which is dearest to God, whom they serve—the life and nature of God in the soul. “ There is joy in heaven, at the conversion of one sinner ; ” heaven gladly takes notice of it ; there is a choir of angels that sweetly sings the epithalamium of a soul divorced from sin and Satan and espoused unto Christ. What, therefore, the wise man speaks concerning wisdom, I shall apply to holiness : “ Take fast hold of holiness, let her not go, keep her, for she is thy life : keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life,” and of death too. Let nothing be esteemed by thee of greater consequence and concern-

ment, than what thou doest and actest, how thou livest. Nothing without can make us either happy or miserable ; nothing can either defile or hurt us but what goes out from us, what springs and bubbles up out of our own hearts. We have dreadful apprehensions of the flames of hell without us ; we tremble, and are afraid, when we hear of fire and brimstone ; whilst, in the meantime, we securely nourish within our own hearts a true and living hell.* The dark fire of our appetites and passions consumes our bowels within, and miserably scorches our souls ; and we are not troubled at it. We do not perceive how hell steals upon us, whilst we live here. And as for heaven, we only gaze abroad, expecting that it should come to us from without, but never look for the beginnings of it to arise within, in our own hearts.

But lest there should exist any prejudice against the true holiness here commended, as if it were a legal and a servile thing, that would subject us to a state of bondage, it may be needful to add a word or two, either for the prevention or removal of that prejudice. By holiness, therefore, is not meant the mere performance of the outward duties of religion, coldly acted over as a task ; nor our habitual prayings, hearings, fastings, multiplied one upon another, though these be all good, as subservient to a higher end ; but what is meant is an

* Et cæco carpimur igni.

inward soul and principle of divine life, which inspirits all these ; which enlivens and quickens the dead carcass of all outward performances whatsoever. The “dead law of outward works,” is not urged, which indeed, if it be alone, subjects us to a “state of bondage ;” but the inward law of the Gospel, the “law of the spirit of life,” than which nothing can be more free and ingenuous : for it does not act by principles without us, but is an inward self-moving principle, living in our hearts.

The inward law here spoken of is the law of love—the most powerful law in the world : and yet it frees us, in a manner, from all law without us, because it makes us become a law unto ourselves. The more it prevails in us, the more it absorbs all other laws without us ; just as Aaron’s living rod swallowed up those rods of the magicians, which were made only to counterfeit a little life. Love is, at once, a freedom from all law, a state of purest liberty ; and yet a law, too, of the most constraining and indispensable necessity.

The worst law in the world is the “law of sin which is in our members ;” which keeps us in a condition of most absolute slavery, when we are wholly under the tyrannical commands of our passions. This is a cruel Pharaoh indeed, who sets his hard taskmasters over us, and makes us wretchedly drudge in mire and clay.

The law of the letter without us sets us in a condition of a little more liberty, by restraining us from

many outward acts of sin ; but it does not disenthral us from the power of sin in our hearts.

But the “law of the Spirit of life,” the Gospel law of love, puts us into a condition of most pure and perfect liberty ; and whosoever really entertains this law, has “thrust out Hagar” quite, he has “cast out the bondwoman and her children ;” from henceforth Sarah, the free woman, shall live forever with him, and she shall be to him a mother of many children ; her seed shall be “as the sand of the sea-shore for number,” and “as the stars of heaven.” Here is evangelical liberty, here is Gospel freedom, when “the law of the Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made us free from the law of sin and death ;” when we have a liberty *from* sin, and not a liberty *to* sin : for our Lord and Master hath told us, that whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of it.

No man is truly free, but he that has his will enlarged to the extent of God’s own will, by loving whatsoever God loves, and nothing else. Such an one does not fondly hug this and that particular created good thing, and enslave himself to it, but he loves everything that is lovely, beginning at God, and descending down to all his creatures, according to the several degrees of perfection in them. He enjoys a boundless liberty, and a boundless sweetness, according to his boundless love. He enclaspeth the whole world within his outstretched arms ; his soul is as wide as the whole universe, as large as “yesterday, to-day, and forever.”

Whosoever is once acquainted with this disposition of spirit, he never desires anything else ; and he loves the life of God in himself dearer than his own life. To conclude this, therefore : if we love Christ, and keep his commandments, his commandments will not be grievous to us ; his yoke will be easy, and his burden light : “it will not put us into a state of bondage, but of perfect liberty.” For, that is most true of evangelical obedience, which the wise man speaks of wisdom : “her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace : she is a tree of life to those that lay hold upon her ; and happy are all they that retain her.”

Zeal.

LET us take heed, lest we sometimes call that zeal for God and his Gospel, which is nothing else but our own tempestuous and stormy passion. True zeal is a sweet, heavenly, and gentle flame which makes us active for God, but always within the sphere of love. It never calls for fire from heaven to consume those who differ a little from us in their apprehensions. It is like that kind of lightning which the philosophers speak of, that melts the sword within, but sings not the scabbard ; it strives to save the soul, but hurts not

the body. True zeal is a loving thing, and makes us always active to edification, and not to destruction. If we keep the fire of zeal within, in its own proper place, it never does any hurt; it only warms, quickens, and enlivens; but if once we let it break out, and catch hold of the thatch of our flesh, and kindle our corrupt nature, and set the house of our body on fire, it is no longer zeal, it is no heavenly fire, it is a most destructive and devouring thing. True zeal is a soft and gentle flame, which will not scorch one's hand; it is no predatory, voracious thing. True zeal is like the vital heat in us that we live upon, which we never feel to be angry and troublesome; but, though it gently feed upon the radical oil within us, that sweet balsam of our natural moisture, yet it lives lovingly with it, and maintains that by which it is fed: but furious and distempered zeal is nothing else but a fever in the soul.

Our zeal, if it be heavenly, if it be true vestal fire kindled from above, will not delight to tarry here below, burning up straw, and stubble, and such combustible things, and sending up nothing but gross and earthly fumes to heaven; but it will rise up, and return back, pure as it came down, and will ever be striving to carry up men's hearts to God along with it. It will be occupied about the promoting of those things only, which are unquestionably good; and, when it moves in the irascible way, it will quarrel with nothing but sin. Here let our zeal busy and exercise itself; every

one of us beginning first at our own hearts. Let us be more zealous than ever we have yet been, in fighting against our inordinate desires, in pulling down these strongholds of sin and Satan in our hearts. Here let us exercise all our courage and resolution, all our manhood and magnanimity.

Humility.

I.

I CALL humility not only a duty, but a principle. Humble-mindedness is a Christian principle, if there be one ; above all, humble-mindedness toward God. The servants, to whom our Lord's expression refers, were to be humble-minded, we may presume, toward one another ; but toward their Lord, the only answer, the only thought, the only sentiment, was to be, " We are unprofitable servants." And who were they that were instructed by our Lord to bear constantly this reflection about with them ? Were they sinners, distinctly so called ? were they grievous or notorious sinners ? nay, the very contrary ; they were persons " who had done all those things that were commanded them ! " This is precisely the description which our Lord gives of the persons to whom his lesson was directed. Therefore, you see that an opinion of merit is

discouraged, even in those who had the least pretensions to entertain it, if any pretensions were good. But an opinion of merit, an overweening opinion of merit, is sure to grow up in the heart, whenever we accustom ourselves to think much of our virtues and little of our vices. It is generated, fostered, and cherished by this train of meditation we have been describing. It cannot be otherwise. And if we would repress it; if we would correct ourselves in this respect; if we would bring ourselves into a capacity of complying with our Saviour's rule, we must alter our turn of thinking; we must reflect more upon our sins, and less upon our virtues. Depend upon it, that we shall view our characters more truly, we shall view them much more safely, when we view them in their defects and faults and infirmities, than when we view them only, or principally, on the side of their good qualities, even when those good qualities are real.

The custom of viewing our virtues has a strong tendency to fill us with fallacious notions of our own state and condition. One almost constant deception is this, viz., that in whatever quality we have pretensions to excel, that quality we place at the head of all other virtues. If we be charitable, then "charity covereth a multitude of sins." If we be strictly honest, then strict honesty is no less than the bond which keeps society together; and, consequently, is that, without which other virtues would have no worth, or rather no

existence. If we be temperate and chaste, then self-government, being the hardest of all duties, is the secret test of obedience. Now every one of these propositions is true ; but the misfortune is, that only one of them is thought of at the time, and that the one which favors our own particular case and character. The comparison of different virtues, as to their price and value, may give occasion to many nice questions, and some rules might be laid down upon the subject ; but I contend that the practice itself is useless, and not only useless, but delusive. Let us leave our virtues to themselves, not engaging our minds in appreciating either their intrinsic or comparative value ; being assured that they will be weighed in unerring scales.

Again, the habit of contemplating our spiritual acquirements, our religious, or moral excellences, has very usually, and almost unavoidably, an unfavorable effect upon our disposition toward other men. A man who is continually computing his riches, almost in spite of himself grows proud of his wealth. A man who accustoms himself to read, and inquire, and think a great deal about his family, becomes vain of his extraction. He can hardly help becoming so. A man who has his titles sounding in his ears, or his state much before his eyes, is lifted up by his rank. These are effects which every one observes ; and no inconsiderable degree of the same effect springs from the habit of meditating upon our virtues. Now humble-minded-

ness is a Christian duty, if there be one. It is more than a duty ; it is a principle ; it is a principle of religion ; and its influence is exceedingly great, not only upon our religious, but our social character. They who are truly humble-minded have no quarrels, give no offence, contend with no one in wrath and bitterness : still more impossible is it for them to insult any man, under any circumstances. But the way to be humble-minded is to think less of our virtues and more of our sins.

II.

This, therefore, is mainly to be studied, that the seat of humility be the heart. And this I would recommend as a safe way : ever let thy thoughts concerning thyself be below what thou utterest ; and what thou seest needful or fitting to say to thy own abasement, be not only content to be taken at thy word, and believed to be such by them that hear thee, but be desirous of it ; and let that be the end of thy speech, to persuade them, and gain it of them, that they really take thee for as worthless a man as thou doest express thyself.

III.

Humility is the great ornament and the jewel of Christian religion ; that whereby it is distinguished from

all the wisdom of the world ; it not having been taught by the wise men of the Gentiles, but first put into a discipline, and made part of a religion, by our Lord Jesus Christ, who propounded himself imitable by his disciples so signally in nothing as in the twin sisters of meekness and humility. “Learn of me, for I am meek and humble ; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

For all the world, all that we are, and all that we have, our bodies and our souls, our actions and our sufferings, our conditions at home, our accidents abroad, our many sins and our seldom virtues, are as so many arguments to make our souls dwell low in the deep valleys of humility.

Humility consists not in thinking thyself better for anything that happens to thee from without. For although thou mayest, by gifts bestowed upon thee, be better than another, yet thou hast nothing to commend thee to thyself but that only by which thou art a man, that is, by what thou choosest and refusest.

Neither does humility consist in railing against thyself, or wearing mean clothes, or going softly and submissively ; but in hearty and real evil or mean opinion of thyself. Believe thyself an unworthy person heartily, as thou believest thyself to be hungry, or poor, or sick, when thou art so.

Whatsoever evil thou sayest of thyself, be content that others should think to be true : and if thou callest thyself fool, be not angry if another says so of thee.

For if thou thinkest so truly, all men in the world desire other men to be of their opinion ; and he is a hypocrite that accuses himself before others, with an intent not to be believed.

Love to be concealed and little esteemed ; be content to want praise, never being troubled when thou art slighted or undervalued ; for thou canst not undervalue thyself, and if thou thinkest so meanly as there is reason, no contempt will seem unreasonable, and therefore it will be very tolerable.

Never be ashamed of thy birth, or thy parents, or thy trade, or thy present employment, for the meanness or poverty of any of them ; and when there is an occasion to speak of them, such an occasion as would invite you to speak of anything that pleases you, omit it not, but speak as readily and indifferently of thy meanness as of thy greatness.

Never speak anything directly tending to thy praise or glory ; that is, with a purpose to be commended, and for no other end. If other ends be mingled with thy honor, as if the glory of God, or charity, or necessity, or anything of prudence be thy end, you are not tied to omit your discourse or your design, that you may avoid praise, but pursue your end, though praise come along in the company. Only let not praise be the design.

When thou hast said or done anything for which thou receivest praise or estimation, take it indifferently

and return it to God ; reflecting upon Him as the giver of the gift, or the blesser of the action, or the end of the design : and give God thanks for making thee an instrument of his glory for the benefit of others.

Secure a good name to thyself by living virtuously and humbly ; but let this good name be nursed abroad, and never be brought home to look upon it : let others use it for their own advantage ; let them speak of it if they please ; but do not thou at all use it but as an instrument to do God glory, and thy neighbor more advantage. Let thy face, like Moses's, shine to others, but make no looking-glasses for thyself.

Suffer others to be praised in thy presence, and entertain their good and glory with delight ; but at no hand disparage them, or lessen the report, or make an objection ; and think not the advancement of thy brother is a lessening of thy worth.

It is of great use, that he who would preserve his humility should choose some spiritual person to whom he shall oblige himself to discover his very thoughts and fancies, every act of his, and all his intercourse with others, in which there may be danger ; that by such an openness of spirit he may expose every blast of vain-glory, every idle thought, to be chastened and lessened by the rod of spiritual discipline ; and he that shall find himself tied to confess every proud thought, every vanity of his spirit, will also perceive they must not dwell with him, nor find any kindness from him ;

and, besides this, the nature of pride is so shameful and unhandsome, that the very discovery of it is a huge mortification and means of suppressing it.

Marks of Humility.

THE humble man trusts not to his own discretion, but in matters of concernment relies rather upon the judgment of his friends, counsellors, or spiritual guides. He does not pertinaciously pursue the choice of his own will, but in all things lets God choose for him, and his superiors, in those things which concern them. He does not murmur against commands, nor is not inquisitive into the reasonableness of indifferent and innocent commands, but believes their command to be reason enough in such cases to exact his obedience. He is meek and indifferent in all accidents and chances. He patiently bears injuries. He is always unsatisfied in his own conduct, resolutions, and counsels. He is a great lover of good men, and a praiser of wise men, and a censurer of no man. He is modest in his speech, and reserved in his laughter. He fears when he hears himself commended, lest God make another judgment concerning his actions than men do. He is ingenuous, free, and open, in his actions and discourses. He mends his fault, and gives thanks when he is admonished. He

is ready to do good offices to his slanderers, backbiters, and detractors, as Christ washed the feet of Judas ; and is contented to be suspected of indiscretion, so before God he may be really innocent, and not offensive to his neighbors, nor wanting to his just and prudent interest.

The Divine Call Imperative.

“LORD, suffer me first to go and bury my father.” Jesus said unto him : “Let the dead bury the dead, but do thou follow me.” Wherefore did He not suffer him ? one may ask. Because, on the one hand, there were those that would fulfil that duty, and the dead was not going to remain unburied ; on the other, it was not fit for this man to be taken away from the weightier matters. But by saying, *their own dead*, He implies that this is not one of His dead. And that because he that was dead was, as supposed, of the unbelievers.

Now if thou admire the young man, that for a matter so necessary he besought Jesus, and did not go away of his own accord ; much rather do thou admire him for staying also when forbidden.

Was it not then extreme ingratitude not to be present at the burial of his father ? If indeed he did so out of negligence, it was ingratitude ; but if in order not to interrupt a more needful work, his departing

would most surely have been of extreme consideration. For Jesus forbade him, not as commanding to think lightly of the honor due to our parents, but signifying that nothing ought to be to us more urgent than the things of Heaven, and that we ought with all diligence to cleave to these, and not to put them off for ever so little, though our engagements be exceeding indispensable and pressing. For what can be more needful than to bury a father? what more easy? since it would not even consume any long time.

But if one ought not to spend even as much time as is required for a father's burial, nor is it safe to be parted even so long from our spiritual concerns; consider what we deserve, who all our time stand off from the things that pertain to Christ, and prefer things very ordinary to such as are needful, and are remiss, when there is nothing to press on us!

And herein too we should admire the instructiveness of our Saviour's teaching, that He nailed him fast to His word, and with this forced him from those endless evils, such as lamentations, and mournings, and the things that follow thereafter. For after the burial he must of necessity proceed to inquire about the will, then about the distribution of the inheritance, and all the other things that follow thereupon; and thus waves after waves coming in succession upon him, would bear him away very far from the harbor of truth. For this cause He draws him and fastens him to Himself.

But if thou still marvellest, and art perplexed, that he was not permitted to be present at his father's burial, consider that many suffer not the sick, if it be a father that is dead, or a mother, or a child, or any other of their kinsmen, to know it, nor to follow him to the tomb; and we do not for this charge them with cruelty nor inhumanity: and very reasonably. For, on the contrary, it were cruelty to bring out to the funeral solemnity men in such a state.

But if to mourn and be afflicted in mind for them that are of our kindred is evil, much more our being withdrawn from spiritual discourses. For this same cause He said elsewhere also, "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of Heaven." And surely it is far better to proclaim the kingdom, and draw back others from death, than to bury the dead body, that is nothing advantaged thereby; and especially when there are others to fulfil all these duties.

Nothing else then do we learn hereby, but that we must not wantonly lose any, no, not the smallest time, though there be ten thousand things to press on us; but to set what is spiritual before all, even the most indispensable matters, and to know both what is life and what is death.

Experimental Religion.

WE must know the true value and use of every principle, of every truth ; and be able readily to apply them. For what does it signify, how important truths are in themselves, if they are not so to me ? What does it avail that they are impregnated with life and power, if I feel not any such influence ? Of what use is the knowledge of Gospel promises to me, if I reap no comfort from them ? Or the knowledge of Gospel threats, if they are unable to curb and restrain my passions ? And so it is with other truths : what will it avail me that I know, “ the life of man consists not in the multitude of the things which he possesses,” if notwithstanding I cannot content myself with a competency ? That righteousness is the chief good, and the richest treasure of the soul of man ; if notwithstanding I seek this world, and the things of it, with a more early and passionate concern ? That sin and pain are the most considerable, if not only evils of man ; if notwithstanding I be cast down and broken under every adversity ? We must follow the advice of Solomon, and never quit the search and meditation of truth, till we grow intimate and familiar with it ; and so have it always ready for a guide and guard for our support and strength, and for our delight and pleasure. We

must bind it about our heart, and tie it as an ornament about our neck. Then, when we go forth it shall lead us, when we sleep it shall keep us, and when we awake it shall talk with us : for the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life. In a word, nothing can render the most important truths powerful and operative in us, but such a digestion of them by serious and devout meditation, as may in a manner incorporate them with us. And this the Scripture plainly teaches, when to signify the force and virtue of the Gospel above the law, it uses these words : “ For this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts ”—intimating that no laws, no principles can ever influence us, till they be deeply imprinted in our hearts.

Sanctification.

OTHER dignities are but for a time, and are brought to an end along with this present life, and may be bought with money, but the gift of sanctification and adoption having been given of God, is not not broken through even by death, but even here maketh men con-

spicuous, and also departs with us upon our journey to the life to come. For he that holdeth on in the adoption, and keeps an exact watch upon his holiness, is much brighter and more worthy of being thought happy even than he that is arrayed with the diadem itself, and has the purple; and has the delight of abundant peace in the present life, and is nurtured up with goodly hopes, and hath no ground for worry and disturbance, but enjoys constant pleasure; for as for good spirits and joy, it is not the greatness of power, not abundance of wealth, not pomp of authority, not strength of body, not sumptuousness of the table, not the adorning of dresses, nor any other of the things in man's reach that ordinarily produces them, but spiritual success, and a good conscience alone. And he that hath this cleansed, though he be meanly clad and struggling with poverty, is of better spirits than they that live so softly. So too he that is conscious of wicked deeds, even though he may gather to himself all men's goods, is the most wretched of all men. If then we wish to enjoy pleasure, above all things else let us shun wickedness, and follow after virtue; since it is not in the nature of things for one to have a share thereof on any other terms, even if we were mounted upon the king's throne itself.

The Christian.

ALTHOUGH the bare profession of Christianity is sufficient to give a man the name, yet something else is requisite to make him a real Christian ; and that is thoroughly to contemplate both the life and doctrine of our Saviour ; to obtain, so far as possible, the same spirit ; to enter into the same temper of mind ; to be moved by the same influences, governed by the same principles ; and in short, to form the life, as exactly as possible, after his model ; that is, to think as he thought, and act as he acted : and this alone is what can truly and deservedly confer upon a man the name of Christian ; though, perhaps, it may reduce the number of Christians within a narrow compass. For, there are as many that bear that title who are not Christians *indeed*, as there were Israelites who were not Israelites *indeed*. He, therefore, that aspires to be a Christian, must never slacken his endeavors till he really feels himself one. And this is very possible ; for the soul is as capable of the perception of things within itself, as the body is of heat or cold, hunger or thirst, ease or pain. And a man may as reasonably conclude that he is a good Christian, without feeling himself such, as he may fancy that he is cold, or hungry, or in pain, without feeling that he is any one of them. It is evident

that a man may feel within himself whether he is, or is not, endued with the qualities belonging to a Christian ; and therefore ought not to rest satisfied of his being perfectly such, till he feels those qualities within him : till he finds himself, in relation to his God, firm in faith, fervent in love, humble, sincere, constant in obedience, and cheerful in resignation. Whilst he is laboring after these several graces, he is endeavoring to be a Christian ; and when he *has* obtained them, he is most certainly a Christian *indeed*.

Christian Progress.

I.

WHOSOEVER thinks himself wise enough, or virtuous enough, is in a fair way never to be either. He that engages in those difficult paths must keep in perpetual motion ; there is no stopping, without losing ground. He must consider, that if his undertaking be glorious, it is also laborious ; that he has a strong tide to stem ; which if he does not keep resolutely advancing, will inevitably bear him down the stream. The current of passion is fierce and rapid, not to be resisted by feeble reason and wavering resolution. But, if the difficulties

to be overcome be great, the prize to be obtained exceeds all value. He, therefore, whose noble ambition pushes him to the pursuit of wisdom and virtue, must not be discouraged at their height ; nor must he think to rest upon the steep ascent of those aspiring mountains, which hide their lofty tops in heaven ; thither we must climb, before we can reach them, securely to sit down, and enjoy eternal happiness and repose.

II.

“ Grow in grace,” is the injunction of Saint Peter ; that is, in every Christian temper. There may be, for a time, grace without growth : as there may be natural life without growth. But such sickly life, of soul or body, will end in death, and every day draw nigher to it. Health is the means of both natural and spiritual growth. If the remaining evil of our fallen nature be not daily mortified, it will, like an evil humor in the body, destroy the whole man. *But if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live*—the life of faith, holiness, and happiness. The end and design of grace being purchased and bestowed on us, is to destroy the image of the earthly, and restore us to that of the heavenly. And so far as it does this it truly profits us ; and also makes way for more of the heavenly gift, that we may at last be filled with all the fulness of God. The strength and well being of a Christian

depend on what his soul feeds on, as the health of the body depends on whatever we may make our daily food. If we feed on what is according to our nature we grow ; if not, we pine away and die. The soul is of the nature of God, and nothing but what is according to his holiness can agree with it. Sin of every kind starves the soul and makes it consume away. If we try to invert the order of God in his new creation, we shall only deceive ourselves. It is easy to forsake the will of God and follow our own ; but this will bring leanness into the soul. It is easy to satisfy ourselves without being possessed of the holiness and happiness of the Gospel. It is easy to call these *frames* and *feelings*, and then to oppose *faith* to one and *Christ* to the other. Frames (allowing the expression) are no other than *heavenly tempers, the mind that was in Christ*: feelings are the *divine consolations* of the Holy Ghost, shed abroad in the heart of him that truly believes. And wherever faith is, and wherever Christ is, there are these blessed *frames* and *feelings*. If they are not in us, it is a sure sign that though the *wilderness became a pool*, the pool is become a wilderness again.

Virtue.

I.

VIRTUE requires the utmost force, application, and exercise of the mind, both in order to its acquisition and preservation. True notions, and right ideas, are not to be acquired without our utmost labor and industry, nor to be preserved without unwearied thought and diligence. And yet, it is absolutely requisite to have both true notions, and right ideas, of things ; without which we must inevitably make a thousand mistakes in the disposal of our affections and aversions, fatal to our present tranquillity and future happiness. For we cannot forbear to love and hate, according to our ideas of things ; and, if our ideas deceive us, we shall love where we should hate, and hate where we should love. From which cause it is, that so many prefer folly and vice to wisdom and virtue, deceived by the false ideas and conceptions formed in the mind of the one and the other. How much, then, ought we to love, and how diligently to seek after, truth, which is the original of all our happiness, as falsehood is of all our misery ? It is faith, it is truth, that is the only unerring light, which can guide and conduct the soul to present peace and eternal felicity ; and it is doubt and falsehood which endeavor to seduce it from both. But,

after all, when we are happy enough to have obtained right ideas, and imprinted them upon the soul, we have then done but half our work. The other no less difficult part is, to preserve them bright and entire, and, by continual reflection and meditation, to renew those impressions which they have made : for, as these decay, our affections, as well as our aversions, will grow languid towards their objects, till at last, by a long neglect, if we should be so wretchedly careless, virtue and vice will grow indifferent to us : and that indifference in the end will naturally terminate in the preference of vice, and the rejection of virtue. Than which there is but one greater curse attending upon folly ; and that is, the soul's eternal confinement to it, even after the discovery of its misery and deformity :

Scorn the world, abandon folly,
 Purchase faith, that glorious treasure ;
 Faith is wisdom, wisdom virtue,
 Virtue truth, and truth is pleasure.

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So long as virtue does not appear lovely to a man, it is in vain for him to imagine that he can love God ; since it is impossible to love the author of the injunction, whilst the duty enjoined is repugnant and distasteful to us. Did ever a slothful servant cordially love his master ? Or did ever a faithful, diligent servant, who was convinced of the reasonableness of all his master's commands, hate him ? No :

where duty and reason are perfectly reconciled, affection will instantly unite itself to them ; and then obedience will become not merely an easy, but a delightful task.

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All virtue is imitation : every wise man knowing full well that his own virtue is no original, but a faint and imperfect copy only, of the divine perfections. It is plain, that whosoever would gain the affections of other men must form his humor to the model of theirs ; otherwise, he can never hope to be successful, since likeness and agreeableness of humors is that which creates mutual friendship and affection. And the same method must be observed towards God : his favor must be obtained by resemblance ; and his image must be drawn upon the soul, before he will place his love upon it. And we know not whether this will not be the main question at the day of judgment, “ Whose image and superscription does he bear ? ” This will be the mark that shall discover to whom every soul belongs, whether to God, or to the devil ; a proprietorship, according to which they must be finally disposed of. For, though both body and soul must share in the judgment, yet the soul alone shall undergo the trial. It will not, therefore, be by a demure or sanctified look, but by a virtuous and sanctified soul, that every one must be acquitted. Be ye perfect, as God is perfect, is the entire sum and substance of religion.

II.

Truth and love, united together, are the essence of virtue or holiness. God indispensably requires "truth in the inward parts," influencing all our words and actions; yet truth itself, separate from love, is nothing in his sight. But let the humble, gentle, patient love of all mankind, be fixed on its right foundation, namely, the love of God springing from faith, from a full conviction that God has given his only Son to die for my sins; and the whole will resolve itself into that grand conclusion, worthy of all men to be received: "Neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by love."

Virtue and Vice.

VIRTUE and vice are words better known in the world by their sound, than by their true meaning. Men take the liberty to give such an interpretation to them as is most suitable to their own fancy and inclination. But he who thinks it necessary to lead a virtuous life, and designs to apply himself heartily to the doing so, must come to a better and juster understanding of what the things are, that are really meant by those words. Virtue consists in acting conformably

to the divine attributes and perfections of God, and vice in acting in opposition and contradiction to those perfections. This latter is very properly called sinning against God; as offending not only against his commands, but against his very essence. For, as acting falsely and deceitfully, oppressively and unjustly, cruelly and maliciously, covetously or impurely, is acting viciously, because plainly against the attributes of truth, justice, mercy, bounty, and purity in God: so, acting faithfully and sincerely, generously and justly, kindly and mercifully, charitably and temperately, is acting virtuously, because in conformity to those several divine attributes. And, as every reasonable man must conceive the Deity to be the exact model of perfection, so he must necessarily contemplate Him as the model for his most exact imitation.

Wisdom.

WISDOM, which is sometimes called holiness, sometimes righteousness, is that vital principle whose separation is as fatal to the soul as the separation of the soul is to the body. It is that lamp of faith which enlightens it, and introduces it into those beauties and glories of the divine perfections, which irresistibly inflame it with love and desire; a love, whose pure fire

purges the soul from dross and impurity ; a love, that utters peace and pardon to it ; a love, that vanquishes sin, and triumphs over temptation. Great God, I beseech thee, cleanse and enlarge all the clogged and narrow passages of my soul, that thy glories may rush in, and perpetually feed it with this divine flame, constantly to ascend, with an uncontrollable motion, in praises and adorations, to thy heavenly throne !

Wisdom and Virtue.

THE practice of wisdom and virtue is the best way to improve and strengthen both. This is a proposition almost self-evident : for, besides that it is acknowledged on all hands that the frequent repetition of single acts of virtue is the natural way to arrive at a habit of it, the practice of virtue gives a man great boldness towards God, mingles joy and pleasure in all his addresses to him, purifies and enlightens the mind, and entitles him to more plentiful measures of grace, and higher degrees of favor. “ If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed ; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” “ To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.” This being so, it is our bounden duty to

omit no opportunity for the practice of virtue in the public and private relations of life. Meditation and prayer are excellent duties, but meekness, mercy, and zeal are equally required of us. The world is an excellent school to a good Christian; the follies and the miseries, the trials and temptations of it, do not only exercise and employ our virtue, but cultivate and improve it: they afford us both instruction and discipline, and naturally advance us on towards solid wisdom, and a well-settled power over ourselves. It is our own fault if every accident that befalls us, and every one whom we converse with, do not teach us somewhat, occasion some wise reflections, or enkindle some pious affection in us. We do not reflect on our words and actions, we do not observe the motions of our own hearts as diligently as we ought; we make little or no application of what we see or hear, nor learn anything from the wisdom and the virtue, the folly and madness of man, and the consequences of both: and so we neither improve our knowledge, nor our virtue, but are the same to-day as we were yesterday, and life wastes away in common accidents and customary actions, with as little alteration in us as in our affairs: whereas were we mindful as we ought of our true interest, and desirous to reap some spiritual benefit from everything, the virtues of good men would enkindle our emulation, and the folly and madness of sinners would confirm our abhorrence of sin: from one we should learn content, from another

industry ; here we should see a charm in meekness and charity, there in humility ; in this man we should see reason to admire discretion and command of himself ; in that, courage and constancy, assiduity and perseverance : nor would it be less useful to us to observe how vanity exposes one, and peevishness torments another ; how pride and ambition embroil a third, and how hateful and contemptible avarice renders a fourth ; and to trace all that variety of ruin, which lust and prodigality, disorder and sloth, leave behind them.

And as these kind of observations will fill us with solid and useful knowledge, so will a diligent attention to the rules of righteousness, and discretion in all the common and daily actions of life, enrich us with true virtue. Religion is not to be confined to the church, and to the closet, nor to be exercised only in prayers and sacraments, meditations, and alms ; but everywhere we are in the presence of God, and every word, every action, is capable of morality. Our defects and infirmities betray themselves in the daily accidents and the common conversation of life ; and here they draw after them very important consequences ; and therefore, here they are to be watched over, regulated and governed, as well as in our more solemn actions. It is to the virtues or the errors of our common conversation and ordinary deportment, that we owe both our friends and enemies, our good or bad character abroad, our domestic peace or troubles ; and in a high degree the im-

provement and depravation of our minds. Let no man, then, that will be perfect or happy, abandon himself to his humors or inclinations in his carriage towards his acquaintance, his children, his servants: let no man that will be perfect or happy, follow prejudice or fashion in the common and customary actions of life: but let him assure himself, that by a daily endeavor to conform these more and more to the excellent rules of the Gospel, he is to train up himself by degrees to the most absolute wisdom, and the most perfect virtue he is capable of. And to this end he must first know himself, and those he has to do with; he must discern the proper season and the just occasion of every virtue; and then he must apply himself to the acquiring the perfection of it by the daily exercise of it, even in those things which, for want of due reflection, do not commonly seem of any great importance.

Plain Truths.

Two kinds of love divide the whole world into two cities: the love of God constitutes Jerusalem; the love of the world forms Babylon: therefore, let every one interrogate himself, and ascertain of which he is a citizen.

As there are two faculties in the medical art—one, by which malady is healed; the other, by which health

is preserved, so are there two gifts of grace—one, by which carnality is overcome; the other, by which the soul is preserved in virtue.

Every command of God is light to him that loves: nor is that saying, "My burden is light," to be otherwise understood than as the effect of love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit. For what we do through love, we do freely; while what one does through fear, he does as a slave. The mind is never upright, when it would rather that (if it could be) that which is right were not commanded.

There are two lives—one of the body, the other of the soul. As the soul is the life of the body, so the life of the soul is God; and, as the body dies when deserted by the soul, so the soul dies when deserted by Christ.

True wisdom is to be sought after during the tranquillity of peace, since it is not easily discovered during the hurricanes of affliction. We cannot expect to find places of shelter in a storm, which we did not look for while it was calm.

Holiness of Life Indispensable.

LET us enter upon the narrow way. How long shall it be luxury?—how long sloth? Have we not had enough of indolence, mirth, procrastination? Will it

not be the same over again—feasting, and surfeiting, and expense, and wealth, and acquisitions, and buildings? And what is the end? Death.

Let us show forth then a new kind of life. Let us make earth, heaven; let us hereby show the world of how great blessings they are deprived. For when they behold in us good conversation, they will look upon the very face of the kingdom of Heaven. Yea, when they see us gentle, pure from wrath, from evil desire, from envy, from covetousness, rightly fulfilling all our other duties, they will say, “If Christians are become angels here, what will they be after their departure hence? if where they are strangers they shine bright, how great will they become when they shall have won their native land!” Thus they too will be reformed, and the word of godliness *will have free course*, not less than in the Apostles’ times. For if they, being twelve, converted entire cities and countries, were we all to become teachers by our careful conduct, imagine how high our cause will be exalted. For not even a dead man raised, so powerfully attracts, as a person practising self-denial. The former will amaze, but the latter will profit us. That is done, and is past away; but this abides, and is constant culture to his soul.

Let us kindle then His fire; let us cause them that are sitting in darkness to be delivered from their error. And tell me not, “I have a wife, and children belong-

ing to me, and am master of a household, and cannot duly practise all this." For though thou hadst none of these, yet if thou be careless, all is lost ; though thou art encompassed with all these, yet if thou be earnest, thou shalt attain unto virtue. For there is but one thing that is wanted, the preparation of a faithful mind ; and neither age, nor poverty, nor wealth, nor reverse of fortune, nor anything else, will be able to impede thee.

Evangelical Religion.

THE Evangelical faith relates not only to our redemption by the death and atonement of Christ, but includes an influential and vital apprehension of all the Divine facts which are placed before us in the Gospel—an apprehension so strong as to bring us within the predominant attraction of the objects apprehended, and, consequently, making them excite in us, according to their respective natures, a fear and a love rising above all other fears and all other loves, and thus producing a reigning spirituality of mind and heart. God, in Christian philosophy, is all in all ; Christ is Emanuel—God with us ; God united to our nature, that in that nature, and by means of the most impressive and

most penetrating of its possible features, He might make every fair and rational principle of the mind—every susceptibility, and every tender fibre of the heart his apt and able auxiliary in the infinitely gracious plan of “redeeming us from all iniquity, and purifying unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Faith, therefore, in this view, is the spiritual sense, the divinely produced organ of the inner man, which holds commerce with those glorious objects, and transmits the impression to the imagination, the affections, and the judgment, as the eye transmits the image formed on its retina to the sentient principle. It is a poor resemblance, but what sensible image can do justice to the highest work of God in our higher nature? Such however is the leading principle, and it is identically the idea of St. Paul,—“We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord; for God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.” 2 Cor. iii. 18; iv. 6. May it not be added, that it is also the most accurate expansion of that compendious but most sublime account of true religion,—“This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

Here, then, on the whole, is genuine, evangelical,

and yet philosophical religion. It is genuine, because it leaves out no ultimate object ; it aims at the very highest ends ; it is not satisfied with a sincere effort, a continued struggle, a few occasional advantages, and a tremulous quiet ; it looks for such a victory as will bring settled peace—a peace never releasing from vigilance, but ever crowning that vigilance with the security which it seeks to preserve. “He keepeth himself so that the wicked one toucheth him not.” “Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is staid on thee, because he trusteth in thee.” It is genuine, too, because its essence is the re-union of the soul to God—to Him from whom our spirit originated, for whom it was formed, and in whom alone it can rest. It is the re-tuning of our discordant mind, the re-adjusting it to the great harmonic system of the intelligent creation, and the restoring it to its place in the universal, never-ending concert.

It is evangelical, because it effects everything through faith in the Divine Mediator. It regards Jesus Christ as the immediate source of all light, all rectitude, all strength ; it considers him as he is, the Eternal God, becoming our refuge, and placing beneath us the everlasting arms ; familiarizing himself with us, becoming our friend and our brother ; but above all, quickening our dead souls with his own spirit, changing our minds and hearts into his own blessed likeness, and accomplishing this in the easiest and least complicated way—

a way glorious to the highest, yet attainable to the plainest understanding ; that is, by making our hearts more and more acquainted with himself. To grow in this spiritual knowledge is infallibly to grow in grace ; for rightly to know our Saviour is to love him : the one is the infinitely certain result of the other ; and to love him, is to love everything that can melt and purify, enrich and elevate, our rational nature. Everything, therefore, that our wants require, or our capabilities admit of, is contained in that brief idea—faith which worketh by love.

The supreme moral purpose and design of the Gospel is to teach us effectually “to deny ungodliness and worldly desires, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.”

Whatever other results were provided for by our Saviour’s death, this moral result is the one great end asserted by St. Paul ; that is, not barely the literal, but the greatly heightened realization of the propounded purpose, “He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Is there in the Sacred volume a more direct, comprehensive, definite statement of that object of our blessed Saviour’s humiliation and death, which was supremely contemplated in the whole stupendous procedure ! To be truly evangelical, therefore, is to feel that the Gospel is the power of God

unto salvation ; and from that feeling, to speak so as to make others feel their want, and hopefully to seek the true supply.

The Affections.

I.

THE Author of human nature has not only communicated affections to men, but has made them very much the spring of their actions. As the affections necessarily belong to human nature, so holy affections not only necessarily belong to true religion, but constitute a principal part of it. And as true religion is of a practical nature, and God has so constituted the human frame that the affections are the spring of men's actions, this also shows that true religion must consist very much in the affections.

Such is the nature of man, that he is quite inactive any further than as he is influenced by some affection. The affections are the springs which set us to work in all the affairs of life, and stimulate us in all our pursuits, especially in all affairs pursued with vigor. Take away all love and hatred, all hope and fear, all zeal and affectionate desire, and the world would, in a great measure, be lifeless ; there would be no such thing as

activity among men, no earnest pursuit of any description. It is affection which engages the covetous, the ambitious, and the voluptuous in their various pursuits. The world continues from age to age in a perpetual commotion and agitation; but take away all affections, and the spring of all this activity would be broken, and the agitation itself would cease. And as in worldly things, worldly affections are very much the spring of action; so in spiritual things, spiritual affections are very much the spring of action. He who possesses doctrinal knowledge only, is never seriously and earnestly engaged in the business of religion.

Nothing is more manifest than that the things of religion take possession of the minds of men no further than as they affect them. There are many who often hear the word of God, and therein hear of those things which are infinitely important and which most intimately concern them; but all that is heard seems to be wholly ineffectual, and to make no alteration in their disposition and behavior: the reason is, they are not affected with what they hear. There are many who often hear of the glorious perfections of God, particularly of his unspeakable love in Christ, of what Christ has done and suffered, and of what relates to another world—eternal misery and eternal felicity; they also hear the immutable injunctions of the law, and the gracious warnings and invitations of the Gospel, and yet remain as they were before, without any

sensible alteration in heart or practice, because they are not affected with what they hear. There never was any considerable change wrought in the mind, or in the deportment of any individual, by anything of a religious nature, which did not move his affections. Never was any one humbled and brought to the throne of grace by anything he ever heard or imagined respecting his own unworthiness, and his exposure to the wrath of God, nor induced to flee for refuge to Christ while his heart remained unaffected. There never was a saint recovered from a declining state in religion, without having his heart affected; and, in short, there never was anything considerable brought to pass in the heart or life of any man by the things of religion, until the mind was deeply affected by those things.

It is undoubtedly true, that the essence of all true religion is holy love; and that in this holy affection, in that light which is the foundation of it, and in those things which are the fruits of it, consists the whole of religion.

From hence it clearly appears that a great part of true religion lies in the affections; for love is not only one of the affections, but the chief and fountain of all the rest. From love arises hatred of those things which are contrary to what we love, 'or which oppose and thwart us in those things in which we delight. From the various exercises of love and hatred, according to the circumstances of the object of these affections, as

present or absent, certain or uncertain, probable or improbable, arise all those other affections of desire, hope, fear, joy, grief, gratitude, anger, etc. From a vigorous, affectionate, and fervent love to God, necessarily arise other religious affections: a dread of the displeasure of God, gratitude to him for his goodness, complacency and joy in him when he is sensibly present, grief and anxiety when he appears to be absent, etc. And in like manner, from a fervent love to men, arise all other virtuous affections towards them.

God has given to mankind affections, for the same purpose that he has given all the faculties and principles of the human soul, that they might be subservient to the great business for which man was created, the business of religion; and yet how common is it among mankind, to have their affections much more exercised and engaged in other matters than in religion. As to those things which concern their worldly interests, the desires of men are eager, and their love warm and affectionate. In reference to these objects they are much impressed, and very deeply concerned. They are much affected with grief at worldly losses, and much elated with joy at worldly prosperity. But how insensible and unmoved are most men about the great things of another world. How languid are their affections as to these things. How insensibly they can sit and hear of the infinite love of God in giving his dear Son to be offered up a sacrifice for the sins of

men ; and of the unparalleled love of the innocent and holy Lamb of God, manifested in his dying agonies, his bloody sweat, his bitter cries and bleeding heart. They can hear that all this was done for his enemies, to redeem them from deserved eternal burnings, and to bring them to unspeakable and everlasting joys, and yet be cold, insensible, and regardless. Where are the exercises of our affections proper, if not here ? what is there that more requires them ; and what can be a fitter occasion of their vigorous and lively exercise ? Can anything of greater importance be presented to our view ; anything more wonderful, or anything more intimately connected with our interests ? Can we suppose that the infinitely wise Creator implanted such principles in the human nature as the affections, to be of essential use to us, and to be exercised on certain objects, but to be totally inactive in reference to those things which are of the very first importance ?

II.

The great end of religion is to draw the heart of man from the love of sin to the love of God and of holiness ; to a superiority over present allurements ; and to a temper and taste fitted for the enjoyment of a better state. For this purpose, rules and maxims would not be sufficient. These might tell us our duty,

but they would not make us love it. But it is the love of duty, and not the mere performance of it, which constitutes the reality of virtue. To this end, not only the mind must be enlightened, but the affections must be attracted; the heart must be made to feel what the understanding comprehends, or the knowledge of duty will be cold and fruitless.

III.

There are feelings of our mind, which we term not passions, but affections, which are clearly distinguishable from all the mere movements of imagination, and are as equable and steady as our passions, properly so called, are fluctuating and fermentitious. These are, obviously, the noblest part of our nature; they are the seat of our highest tastes, and the sources of all our deepest pains, and purest pleasures. Here, then, evidently, it is that we must fix the central seat of religion; we are instructed to do so, equally by the voice of reason and Holy Scripture. According to both, there is no true piety but in the love of God: and love is self-evidently the master affection of the heart. Devotion, therefore, can be no more said to have its "source in that relish for the sublime, the vast, and the beautiful, by which we taste the charms of poetry and other compositions that address our finer feelings," &c., than

disinterested friendship, or filial love, could be ascribed to this origin. We always see that, in proportion as either of these habits, or any similar habit, is ardent and deep, it employs the imagination, and is apt to excite the passions. But these latter faculties of the soul are but the instruments or adjuncts of our affections; they by no means belong to its essence: and experience largely proves that we are not to estimate the internal principle merely by those more apparent movements. At the same time, it is most certain that natural vividness of imagination will be called into action, in proportion as the object of affection is possessed of sublimity and beauty. Nothing, therefore, is more evident than that, when our supreme affection is fixed on the first and greatest of objects, the original of all sublimity and beauty, the imagination will of necessity find in that object both its amplest range and its noblest exercise. “One of the final causes,” says Addison, “of our delight in anything that is great may be this:—The supreme Author of our being has so formed the soul of man, that nothing but Himself can be its last, adequate, proper happiness. Because, therefore, a great deal of our happiness must arise from the contemplation of His being, that he might give our souls a just relish of such a contemplation, he has made them naturally delight in the apprehension of what is great or unlimited. Our admiration immediately rises, at the consideration of any object that

takes up a great deal of room in the fancy ; and, by consequence, will improve into the highest pitch of astonishment and devotion, when we contemplate his nature, that is neither circumscribed by time nor place, nor to be comprehended by the largest capacity of a created being."

Religious Feeling.

THE grand deficiencies in right temper and conduct arise much more from want of right feelings than from want of knowledge : and right feelings cannot so certainly be either obtained or improved, as by communication and close intercourse with those who possess them. "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend." Solomon said some true things ; and this is not the least important of them.

True religion is happily contagious ; and I am sure it owed its rapid progress, in the early ages of the church, infinitely more to the divine infection that attended the spirit of the apostles, than to the demonstrative evidence of their miracles. I believe there never yet was a really good man—I mean a zealous, decided Christian—whose lively expression of his own feelings did not more or less reach the hearts of those who heard him.

PART IV.

“Taste, considered in the most extended sense of the term, is eminently and essentially our moral faculty. As our likings are, so are we ourselves. We may know what is right, without carrying it into either feeling or practice. We may do what is right hypocritically, so as to become worse, instead of better, by doing so ; but if we love what is right, if we have an inward taste for goodness,—preferring it from a heartfelt pleasure which it gives us, independently of all views of interest, or all mercenary hopes and fears,—then, and then only, are we virtuous persons, entitled to estimation here, and sure of bliss hereafter.”—ALEXANDER KNOX.

PART IV.



The Gentleman.

THE first thing a gentleman ought to be well acquainted with, is *religion*, as the only source of solid wisdom, and the main ground of a just and lasting reputation : nor indeed can I see how a man can be considerable without it : for though base ends have their base instruments in all other cases, I see not how any one can trust those who are false to God and themselves. It is scarce to be expected, that he who sacrifices his religion and his reason, that is, himself, to any lust or passion, should be nice and scrupulous of giving up a remoter interest or obligation to it. But when the gentleman should be acquainted with religion, it does not mean that he should perplex and amuse himself with the disputes that have beclouded, or the subtilities which have dispirited or enervated Christianity. I would have him have so much illumination as to be able to distinguish between natural religion and the

politics, revealed religion and the fancies and whimsies of man : I would have him thoroughly instructed in the reasons and grounds of our common Christianity ; and study and ruminate them, till he feel the power of them, and find himself formed and impressed by them. He understands religion well, who learns from it what it is to be just, and derives from it courage enough to dare to be so. It is a necessary and a good accomplishment in a gentleman to be so far acquainted with ecclesiastical history, as not to be ignorant what influence religion, or the pretences of it, has upon the world, and what use cunning men have ever made of it ; and by what degrees or what arts the maxims of the world have been incorporated into religion. Thus you will discern what the true measures of religion are : you will have a just regard for wise constitutions without bigotry ; you will free yourself from all those doubts and scruples which usher in atheism and profaneness ; and, in a word, you will find religion the true standard of wisdom and discretion, the effectual instrument of private and public good, and the infallible guide to honor and happiness.

The gentleman's time ought not to be so wholly taken up in business as not to leave vacancies for *religion, meditation, friendship, and diversion*. They are two extremes fatal to happiness, to have no business at all, or so much as leaves no room for books or friends, for *meditation* or necessary *diversion* : for this makes

life very barren and very dull ; it makes business mere drudgery, and places the great man in a more toilsome condition than the mean one, and makes him wish for the ease of his tenants and servants. Nor is this the only evil of an uninterrupted pursuit of worldly business ; but, what is worse, it extinguishes all gust of virtue, all relish of heavenly things ; and, instead of the courage and peace with which religion inspires men, it leaves them without any rational support or comfort, either consuming with perplexed and anxious thoughts about the event of things, or hardened into a neglect, if not contempt of religion, proposing to themselves no other or higher end of life than the acquitting themselves well in the station they are, and ascribing the issue of affairs to no other providence than such as they are daily wont to employ about them, and to such other accidents as they have observed them ever and anon subject to.

When a vacant time is demanded for religion, it is because it is the first and greatest business of human life ; it being in vain to gain the whole world for him who loses his soul, or to be intent in preserving or advancing the peace or welfare of the public for him whose mind is filled with disorder and guilt ; it is therefore supposed all actions of the day so conducive as to become instances of Christian virtue ; justice and integrity, courage and bounty, patience and gentleness, mingling themselves in the discharge of every civil busi-

ness : and then the religion for which is demanded some vacant moments, is that of public and private devotion : without which it is impossible for the great man either to preserve reputation without, or peace within. Public devotion is not only an act of worship due to God, but, in a gentleman, a testimony of the honor which he has for the community he is of, and an expression of charity towards those who are influenced by his example. Nor is private devotion less necessary than public, not only because public without private devotion sinks into formality without the power of godliness ; nor yet because every man's reputation flows first from his domestics, who can have no veneration for him who appears to have none for his God ; though even these reasons ought not to be contemned ; but especially because every man has particular wants and particular obligations, and none more than the great one, and therefore must offer up to God his particular petitions and prayers. I cannot therefore tell how to think, that he who does not begin and close the day with prayer to God, can believe there is one ; he that does not invoke Providence, seems to defy it ; and he who sacrificeth not to God, seems to sacrifice to his own net.

As to meditation, it is so essential a part of religion, and so indispensable a preparative for devotion, that I should not have placed it here by itself, did I not extend its design something further. Meditation is that act which of all others does most delight and nourish

the mind, which of all others is most fit to raise and strengthen it. In other actions we seem to move mechanically ; in this alone, rationally. In all others our reason seems confined and fettered by prescriptions, customs, and circumstances ; in this alone it seems to enjoy its native freedom and liberty. In all other things the mind seems to be impressed and moulded by the matter and business about which it is conversant ; but in this it gives what forms and circumstances it pleases to both ; in this it has a kind of creative or productive power, and a sort of despotic sovereignty. In a word, he who is ignorant of the force of meditation, is a stranger to the truest pleasure of human life, to the most useful, taking and natural act of the human soul.

As to diversion, it ever must be such as may consist with the dignity of the person, or the urgency of his employment ; such as may not lessen his character or waste his time ; such as may refresh and recruit nature, and from which he may return to his business with new vigor and new appetite : and it were very well, if diversions were so wisely contrived, that they might at once delight and improve the mind. The pursuit of physic or husbandry, the principles of any curious mechanic performances, music, architecture, and such like, might be proper entertainments for vacant hours : but if the health of the body as well as pleasure of the mind be aimed at in diversion, it were well to have always

ready some wise friends, by whose help and conversation the time you bestow upon the health of the body may not be utterly lost to the mind.

When I press gentlemen to the noblest heights of virtue, I do not forget that they are exposed to more numerous and more violent solicitations to vice than other men—I know it; but, at the same time, they pretend to a higher spirit, and a more refined education; and their virtue always shines with a double lustre; its own, and that of their fortune: so that moderate attainments in them make a greater show than the more perfect and accomplished men of a lower sphere; and, finally, that those advantages and prerogatives, which they enjoy by their birth and station, do put them in a better condition than other men to defend their true liberty, and to pursue those methods which reason and virtue dictate.

Secular Pursuits.

THE merchant or trader must be sure that his calling be lawful; that is, such as is neither forbidden by any law of God, or government, nor does it in its own nature minister to vice. There are some callings that minister to sin directly and necessarily; others only ac-

cidentally, and not by the immediate intention of the artist or trader, but the abuse of others. The former sort of trades are unlawful in themselves, and no pretence can sanctify the use of them; he that directly and immediately ministers to a sin, communicates in the guilt of it.

Trade ought to be managed with truth, justice, and charity: for without these, it is only a more cleanly art of cheating or oppression—sins, which I doubt can receive but little excuse or mitigation from the custom and practice of them; without these, trade cannot be regular and easy, nor gain comfortable and delightful, since no man can have any confidence in the protection of God, when the methods of his thriving are such as merit vengeance, not a blessing.

The trader's attendance on his calling must not discharge him from his attendance on religion. It is true that duty of every one's secular calling is a part of religion; but this ought to be well understood, that so neither a veneration for religion breed a neglect of your callings, nor an over-fond opinion of the merit of industry in your calling breed a contempt of religion: it is fit therefore to put you in mind, that arts and trades have not in themselves any direct or immediate tendency, either to the improvement of reason or the production of virtue; they minister to the necessities of this world, not the glories of another; nor are they so much the works of a rational and spiritual as

of a mortal and indigent being : from whence it follows, that though they are necessary to the present state of things, yet can they deserve to employ you no longer than either the public benefit or private convenience requires it ; and that you are then only wisely taken up about these, when neither your endowments nor fortunes capacitate you for a life more immediately and directly serviceable to the purposes of reason and revelation : and, finally, that the works of a secular profession are then only acceptable sacrifices to God, when consecrated by wise principles and virtues, cleaving to and mingling with them. Do not therefore think that a pretence of business can cancel your obligations to the duties of Christianity. If a man could fancy business and religion incompatible, it is evident which were to be preferred ; since if the will of God be so, it is much better to be starved than to be damned. But without carrying the matter so far, it is plain that virtue and religion, with a competency, render men abundantly more happy than wealth can do, if attended with the neglect or contempt of either : it is the riches of the mind make men great and happy ; the ignorant and irreligious can never be either. Let no man therefore think that he suffers any damage, if he be forced to maintain his virtue and religion by the diminution of his trade ; though I cannot comprehend that there can be a necessity of this : for I have never yet observed any man so oppressed and overcharged

with business, as not to find time for pleasure, when he has pretended he could find none for religion. In a word, the neglect of religion is capable of no excuse; not because your future, but present happiness depends upon it. Modesty or moderation, to curb a vain and ambitious thirst of wealth; faith or confidence in the providence of God, to restrain you from mean, base, and unlawful courses; self-resignation, to prevent anxiety, and those fears to which the uncertainties, changes, and revolutions of times and trade make men subject, are as necessary to the peace and happiness of a trader as a competent stock, industry or skill, can be to his worldly success or prosperity: and though men who allow themselves no time, either for attendance on public religion or private meditation, may talk finely of these virtues by way of notion and speculation, it is impossible they should be really possessed of them. It were well that those words of our Saviour, “what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul,” were written in capital letters in the most conspicuous place of the counting-house, and the shop, that you might ever be put in mind that there is one thing more necessary even than the diligent and prosperous management of your trade—namely, religion. To what purpose is it that your books are well kept, that there is order and regularity in the whole conduct of your trade, that you be punctual dealers toward men, that you have credit and honor upon the change,

if at the same time your hearts lie neglected like the field of the sluggard, if you be bankrupts toward God, if you be poor and beggarly, shameful and sneaking in yourselves within, having your souls destitute of any true peace, wealth or courage, and that you shift the accusations and importunities of conscience as much as a wretched debtor would a severe and inexorable creditor? Ah! while you pursue the world, forget not that there is a heaven; and while you make provision for time, make some too for eternity: let your stating your accounts with men put you in mind of clearing your accounts with God; and let these two things never be out of your thoughts: first, that it is God who gives man power to get wealth; and next, that it is not a clear estate, but a clear soul, that makes man happy; that is, a soul freed from silly and vile affections, and enriched with a knowledge and love of God and goodness.

Mistake me not; I do not think it unlawful to be rich, or to leave one's family so; but I think it foolish and sinful to sacrifice the peace of one's mind, and the ease of one's life, to the lust of riches: it is silly and vicious to raise a family by meanness and sordidness, or to lay the foundation of children's greatness in one's infamy. It is not wealth but an inordinate passion for it which is censurable; prosperity is the gift of God, a common reward of Christian virtues; for Christianity is said to have the promise of this life, and that which is to come. Wealth then may be received, but it must not be estimated as your first and chief end.

It seems to be natural and desirable to finish business ere we finish life ; to lay down our burden ere we tire and fall under the weight of it, and quit troublesome employments before our bungling discharge of them proclaim the decay of our parts and strength, and the increase of our avarice and ambition ; besides, the advice of the prophet seems to be addressed to every man, "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." It is highly necessary to leave the world before you are torn from it, and to acquaint yourselves more familiarly with another world before you pass into it to make your abode in it forever. Certainly it requires some time to prepare the soul for death and judgment ; and that man will be very unfit for either, who is carried from the counting-house to the grave, and from the entanglements of secular cares to the tribunal of God.

Gifts.

THERE are active and contemplative gifts, and it is a great point for any one to be able to know himself so well as to discern what the God of nature has designed him for. Some, who are a disgrace to a public station, would be an ornament to a private one : many, who act but awkwardly, think and meditate very

wisely and accurately ; and some, who do but expose themselves in business, would pass very well in retirement, and prove excellent examples of virtue and goodness. Men addicted to learning usually covet retirement, being too plain or too great for a crafty world, and when master of their wishes, seem more particularly obliged to dedicate themselves to some eminent service of the public : these must not bury their talents, but ripen them in quiet and retirement ; like guardian angels, they should procure the honor and happiness of the places which they seldom or never appear to ; and withdrawing only, not to avoid the service, but the foolery of the world, they must ever maintain an active charity and compassion for those they leave behind, caught and entangled in it ; and must out of gratitude travail to obtain some blessing or other upon that government, to whose protection they owe the comforts and security of their retreat. But though this direction immediately concerns men of talents, yet none are utterly exempt from this obligation of procuring the public good in their proportion. Who is there so destitute of the gifts of grace, nature or fortune, as to have no mite to cast into the public treasury ? He that dares not pretend to attempt enlightening or reforming the world, can yet advise and comfort his ignorant or afflicted neighbor : he who cannot give advice at all, may yet give alms, which very often is as solid and substantial a benefit ; and he that cannot do this, can

yet never be excused from offering up daily prayers for the peace and welfare of his country, for the preservation and edification of the church, for the conversion of sinners and the extension of true religion and piety in the world. To conclude, he that leads the most private and sequestered life can never be supposed utterly incapable of rendering service to others; since the single example of virtue and integrity, and the warmth of a pious and edifying conversation, is of the greatest use. Some way or other the most solitary life ought to serve the public, that so leisure may not minister to wantonness and sloth, but piety and virtue; and the world may not lose a member, but enjoy its service in its proper place and most effectual manner.

Pride.

I.

It is wonderful that pride should be so natural to man; that it should take root so deep, in so impotent and helpless a creature. For, when rightly considered, all human power is entirely founded upon human weakness: it is not the empire over beasts, but over his fellow-creature man, that is the subject of his ambition, and cause of his pride. And this reflection ought to be his mortification, that he himself is liable to all the injuries which he can offer to another, and that it is the

weakness and infirmity of human nature, common alike to himself and others, which renders any man obnoxious to his cruelty or oppression.

Pride, by a great mistake, is commonly taken for greatness of soul, as if the soul was to be ennobled by vice. Now, that pride is one of the most enormous of vices, I think no reasonable man will dispute ; it is the base offspring of weakness, imperfection, and ignorance : since, were we not weak and imperfect creatures, we should not be destitute of the knowledge of ourselves ; and had we that knowledge, it were impossible we should be proud. But, on the contrary, genuine humility is the certain mark of a bright reason, and elevated soul ; for, in truth, it is their natural consequence. When we come to have our minds cleared, by reason, from the thick mists that our disorderly passions cast about them ; when we come to discern more perfectly, and consider more nearly, the immense power and goodness, the infinite glory and duration, of God ; when we come to make a comparison between his perfections, and our own frailty and weakness, and the shortness and uncertainty of our beings,—then we should humble ourselves even to the dust before Him. Can the greatest monarch upon earth free himself from the least mischief, incident to the meanest of men ? Can he, by his own power, give vigor to his body, or length to his life ? Can he free the body from pains and diseases, or the life from vexation and trouble ?

If not, what excellence has he to boast of, above other men? What advantage has he to be proud of, in relation to his fellow creatures? Custom has made a wide difference, indeed, between man and man; but it is a difference purely fanciful, and not real; for it must be some intrinsic worth in any creature, that gives it the preference to another. Titles, riches, and fine houses contribute no more to making one man better than another, than the finer saddle to making the better horse. And it truly shows a poor spirit for one man to take these paltry advantages of another. If he is ambitious to excel his fellows, let it be in something that belongs to himself, something that demonstrates him to be a better creature. Let him not think, like a false jewel among ignorant people, to derive a value from being set in gold. Let him contend in virtue, which alone is capable of putting a great and true difference between man and man. Whosoever gains the advantage here has reason to value it, though it will never make him proud.

II.

Wheresoever pride predominates in the soul of man, self-love is the most powerful and active principle in that pride. The extraordinary opinion of himself which a proud man has, makes the extravagant value he has for his own imaginary merit appear to him just,

and the great contempt he has for all other men reasonable. And, from this vain and foolish conceit, he fancies that all the bounties and blessings of Providence ought to centre in him, and looks upon the prosperous events that happen to others as so many unjust distributions of that good to which he alone has a right. It is no wonder, therefore, that a man possessed with such wild notions should always be ready to bestow upon himself any advantage that lies in his power, how much soever it may be to the detriment of others, whom he considers as so many ciphers in the creation, and himself as the only significant figure. It is this excessive pride, this unreasonable self-love, which excites in the mind of man all those motions and agitations that hurry him to tyranny, oppression, fraud, rapine, cruelty, and almost every other mischievous and detestable vice ; so that, wherever this passion rules, she governs with an imperious sway, and is surrounded with a numerous retinue, composed of every ill. From this it is plain that a wise and virtuous man can never be proud ; nor can he be exalted in his thoughts at any advantage he has above others ; because he is conscious of his own weakness and inability to become either wise or virtuous by anything he finds in his own power. And his sense of the goodness of the bountiful God, in bestowing upon him more abundantly what he has been pleased more sparingly to vouchsafe to others, will inspire his soul with humility,

thankfulness, and adoration. Besides, he will reflect how unworthy he would be of so glorious a distinction, and of so invaluable, as well as undeserved a preference to other men, if he could be capable of acting so as to seem to attribute any part of it to himself; and how just it would be in that adorable Being to deprive him of those blessings which have flowed from the Divine bounty alone, and to degrade him to the lowest rank of human nature. But no reasonable man can think himself able to acquire and preserve wisdom by his own strength, when he knows that either a blow or disease is capable of making an idiot of him: and thus, finding himself too weak to preserve his wisdom, his reason will readily demonstrate to him that he wants force to acquire it. But, on the contrary, a proud and, which is all one, a foolish man thinks nothing too good for himself, and everything too good for others; he thinks he has an indisputable title to all the enjoyments of life, and that other men are unworthy of them. His pride and envy make him unconcerned how little other men enjoy of happiness; whilst his viciously tender love for himself gives him the vain conceit that he alone ought of right to engross it: his narrow mind, therefore, is confined to the compass of his own body; whereas the virtuous, which is the only great and generous soul, admits of no limits to his bounty and love, but such as give bounds to the creation.

Moderation.

It is granted on all hands that moderation is a virtue : but that is to say too little of it ; since it is the indivisible point in which all virtue centres. For all excess is vicious ; and that spot only, which is free and unpossessed by excess, is the point of moderation, and the very centre of virtue and truth ; surrounded with extremes without partaking of them. The virtue of prudence is moderation in judgment ; the virtue of temperance is moderation in appetite ; the virtue of justice is moderation in mutual dealings and intercourse amongst men ; and the virtue of fortitude is moderation, setting just bounds and limits to fear and desire, and equally balancing the mind between timidity and rashness. It would be as easy to trace moderation, in all the inferior subordinate virtues, as in these principal and original ones ; but this suffices to show that moderation is the point in which all virtue resides, and that there can be no separation between them. So that, when it is required that our moderation should be known to all men, nothing less is meant than that we should give to the world undeniable evidences of our virtue, truth and sincerity ; which are all comprehended in that one word moderation. But if anybody imagines that, in a contest concerning an important truth, to yield up the point and depart from that truth is

moderation, he is infinitely mistaken ; for it is so very far from it, that it is a vicious, and, by consequence, immoderate compliance. To comply in indifferent matters, is charity and civility ; but to comply where justice and truth are concerned, is a manifest renunciation both of the one and the other ; and men must have a care that they do not permit their virtue to be overpowered, either by their good nature or good breeding.

Honesty.

HONESTY is like a strong perfume : one little grain of it suffices to enrich a great mass that had neither scent nor value before. How little honesty is there in the world ! and, yet, what numbers of men, that by some notion or other are termed honest ! A small proportion of this noble, though unfashionable virtue, is sufficient to gain the vulgar esteem ; though the most of it that one who truly endeavors to be an honest man can make himself master of, will scarce give him a tolerable opinion of himself : for here it is requisite that his desires should enlarge themselves beyond what he possesses ; or else, a very moderate degree of it will make him sit down contented. Some men are satisfied if they can but shelter themselves from ignominy under

the shadow of honesty ; and others, if they have but enough of it to procure them a pretty good reputation, have as much as they desire ; and, certainly, if the esteem of unthinking people were of any value, much more than they deserve, since that is all they aim at. Thus the first sort betake themselves to honesty, as they would to a spreading tree in a storm, only for shelter and protection ; the latter make use of it, as they who want true ones do of false jewels, to amuse the world with their counterfeit lustre, and deceitfully to procure themselves that respect to which they had no just title. What worth, then, must there be in the thing itself, whose bare appearance can give protection and confer esteem ? But, as honesty deserves diligently to be sought after, so it is most difficult to be acquired ; being an elixir extracted from all the virtues ; never right when any one of them is wanting in its composition. For it is not enough to be honest only so long as a man may be honest with safety ; he ought to preserve his integrity at the expense of his life. He that designs to be a real honest man, must think that the most honorable character he can possibly aspire to ; and must have the least falsehood or injustice in as great a detestation, as murder or blasphemy. So far must he be from doing wilfully a dishonest action, that his soul must abhor a dishonest thought. In short, he ought to be unmovable and unshaken ; neither to be deterred by fear, nor allured by advantage, but to be proof

against all temptations ; and he should value his sincerity equally with the favor of his God, believing that he shall undoubtedly forfeit the one whenever he foregoes the other.

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No man can truly be termed an honest man who is capable of being moved by any temptation whatsoever to be dishonest. For, though there were but one temptation in the world that had power to work that effect, yet such a person still lies under the possibility of being an ill man. And the best that can be said of him is, that he is honest than thousands of others ; and has but that one unhappy exception to his being a perfectly upright and virtuous man. A citadel may be called strong, in comparison of a weaker, because it can hold out a longer siege ; but, if any force be able to make it surrender, it cannot be called impregnable : neither can the soul of man be positively termed virtuous, till it is so fortified as to become impregnable against all manner of vice.

Reputation no True Rule of Action.

It is a great mistake among many, that reputation is to be the rule of action ; which is as much as to affirm that an uncertain and variable thing is to be a certain

and fixed direction ; that a heap of sand, which will be scattered by the first wind, is a sufficient landmark for travellers forever to know their way by ; that a thing which is capable of as many forms and sudden changes as the clouds in the air, is a constant and settled rule of behavior and action. In short, if we have no other rule of action but reputation, we have no rule at all. But we have another, which we may securely follow and depend upon ; such a one as will keep us always in the right way, if we can but be happy enough to keep our eyes fixed upon it : which rule is, the united principles of right reason and religion, or rather of true Christianity, which is right reason. Here we have a substantial rule ; there we have only the wavering shadow of one : here we have something that will last as long as right reason lasts ; there we have something that will change as often as the stream of men's fancies and opinions changes, which is as often as the weathercock : and those who resolve to be directed by it, must be as inconstant as the wind. Were a man always to be governed by reputation, he must change the fashion of his virtues as often as the fashion of his clothes ; otherwise he will run the hazard of being laughed at for an old-fashioned virtue, as well as for an old-fashioned coat. A foundation that is unfixed is a foundation upon sand, fit only for fools to build on. Wise men, therefore, will find another, and choose a foundation that has itself a foundation to rest upon ;

and then they know they may build securely. The true foundation of action is the truth and rectitude of action ; and the foundation of that truth and rectitude is the eternal perfection and will of the divine nature. We are to do things because they are right, not because they are commendable, but commendable because they are right. Wisdom, not vanity, ought to move us to virtue. We are to act for the sake of truth, in order to please God ; not for the sake of praise, in order to please fools. Neither are we to satisfy ourselves with the trifling bauble of vain reputation, but with the substantial benefit of having done our duty, and of having pleased that adorable Being whom we are obliged to make it the whole business of our lives to please. But to come to a clearer state of this matter, without which there can be no avoiding of confusion, it is necessary to distinguish between the different notions of virtue, and the different motives to it ; by which we may judge of the difference there is in men's notions of reputation. This distinction will be confined to two, viz., the heathen notion of virtue, and the Christian notion of it. The most celebrated heathens entertained the persuasion that glory was the only object fit for the pursuit of great and generous souls ; and such designs only were to be formed and prosecuted by them as would procure them the most lasting, and, as they vainly enough imagined, immortal glory ; that is, the praise and applause of their actions while they lived, and the per-

petuation of their fame in after ages ; so that future generations might bestow that commendation upon their names and memories which the present did upon their living persons. This present and future glory was the idol of the more generous heathens ; it was the ultimate good which they proposed to themselves in this life, and the only felicity for which they hoped after death : so that the only motive of all their actions, the only incitement to their ambition, was glory and praise ; a thin diet for a rational mind to feed upon ; all the pleasure and immortality of which was to be enjoyed in the short space of this present life only, by the help of a vain fancy and over-heated imagination. The other notion, of Christian virtue, is this, that the principal thing toward which a wise man ought to bend his thoughts, designs, and actions, is the approbation and favor of God ; the eternal enjoyment of whom is the true immortal glory after which he ought ambitiously to aspire. This is no vain imaginary pleasure, but a real felicity ; to be felt, tasted, and enjoyed forever. It will not fail and vanish, when the heat of imagination is extinguished, like the pleasure of commendation and praise ; but it will be so inseparably united to our very souls and beings, that the one must last as long as the other. This is the true virtue, the true principle of action, as well as the true rule by which it is to be regulated. When our actions are formed and finished by this rule, they will deserve

praise and commendation ; and we may with assurance give it to ourselves, though all the world refuse it to us.* He who has the approbation of a well-instructed, well-regulated conscience, needs no other ; if that acquits him, it is a divine acquittal, nor needs he care who condemns him.† Those who walk altogether by reputation travel in a labyrinth amongst such a multiplicity of ways that they never find the right one, but weary themselves in fruitless and endless labor. Among good fellows, it is a reputation to drink ; among the debauched, to be intemperate ; among the atheists, to blaspheme ; among the pickpockets, to cheat and steal ; among politicians, to deceive and circumvent ; and among heroes, to plunder and oppress. In short, every one commends what he likes best himself ; and where there is such a variety of directors, a man who has no other knowledge of his road, will be very apt to miss it. Among the clamors of so many false reputations, the low voice of a true reputation is hardly to be heard ; and, if heard, it will hardly be credited, against so strong an opposition. There are so few who value either men or actions because they are good, that he who only considers reputation will be apt to choose one that makes a loud noise. Men generally love to have their praises proclaimed, not whispered. There

* Prov. xiv. 14.

† Rom. xiv. 22. 2 Cor. i. 12.

are not many who can have the patience to stay till the day of judgment, to receive the approbation and applause of their actions. If a man is scorched with the thirst of praise, he will strive to quench it, though it be in the first puddle ; he will not take the pains to search far for a clear fountain, if muddy water be near at hand. But it may be objected, that certainly reputation is a valuable thing, since it has been accounted so by the wisest of men : neither is it to be denied that a just and true reputation is a most desirable thing ; but I deny that it is desirable, only as it is praise and commendation ; since ill actions, among many people, may procure those, as well as good ones ; but it is desirable, as it is the effect of a desirable cause ; it is desirable, because true merit, which only can give a true reputation, confers it ; and true merit is what everybody ought to aspire after, and to be thankful to God for giving it to them, when they have it. Men ought to be truly virtuous, because true virtue is in itself a desirable thing, loved by that adorable wisdom which is the fountain of all wisdom, as well as of all virtue ; and whether it is its fortune to be commended or neglected, esteemed or despised, it will not, or at least ought not, to appear less amiable to those who admire, covet, and possess it, because they are assured it will make them approved and accepted, where approbation and acceptance is a more valuable, lasting, and substantial blessing than even that immortal fame and

glory which is so generally and foolishly preferred before it.

“How can ye believe which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh of God only?”

A strong vanity makes a weak faith,
And a strong faith a weak vanity.

Calumny.

It is an argument of a candid, ingenuous mind, to delight in the good name and commendations of others; to pass by their defects and take notice of their virtues; and to speak and hear of those willingly, and not endure either to speak or hear of the others; for in this indeed you may be little less guilty than the evil speaker in taking pleasure in it, though you speak it not. He that willingly drinks in tales and calumnies will, from the delight he hath in evil hearing, slide insensibly into the humor of evil speaking. It is strange how most persons dispense with themselves in this point, and that in scarcely any societies shall we find a hatred of this ill, but rather some tokens of taking pleasure in it; and until a Christian sets himself to an inward watchfulness over his heart, not suffering in it any thought that is uncharitable, or vain self-esteem, upon the slight of others' frailties, he will still be sub-

ject to somewhat of this, in the tongue or ear at least. So, then, as for the evil of guile in the tongue, a sincere heart, truth in the inward parts, powerfully redresses it; therefore it is expressed, Ps. xv. 2, "That speaketh the truth from his heart;" thence it flows. Seek much after this, to speak nothing with God, nor men, but what is the sense of a single unfeigned heart. O sweet truth! excellent but rare sincerity! He that loves that truth within, and who is Himself at once the Truth and the Life, He alone can work it there! Seek it of Him.

The Passions.

It is believed that men's passions not only make them miserable in this world, but are no inconsiderable part of their torment in hell. For the body limits and restrains the soul; so that the flame either of virtue or vice cannot, in this life, blaze to an excessive degree. But, when it is freed from that confinement, the passions become ten thousand times more furious and raging, being let loose by divine vengeance to torment and rack the vicious soul; as, on the other hand, every virtue is heightened and increased immeasurably, to the infinite joy of the soul that is virtuous. For it is to be supposed that the inclinations, either to virtue or vice, which the soul has at its departure out of the body, are

not changed, but exceedingly augmented and strengthened, after its separation. It is highly necessary, therefore, to endue the soul with an habitual virtue before it passes into eternity, where habits are not altered, but improved.

Governing of the Passions.

GOD, who knows our frailty, pities our weakness, and requires of us no more than we are able to do, and sees what was, and what was not, in our power, will judge as a kind and merciful father. But the forbearance of a too hasty compliance with our desires, the moderation and restraint of our passions, so that our understandings may be free to examine, and reason unbiassed give its judgment, being that whereon a right direction of our conduct to true happiness depends; it is in this we should employ our chief care and endeavors. In this we should take pains to suit the relish of our minds to the true intrinsic good or ill that is in things, and not permit an allowed or supposed possible great and weighty good to slip out of our thoughts, without leaving any relish, any desire, of itself there, till, by a due consideration of its true worth, we have formed appetites in our minds suitable to it, and made ourselves uneasy in the want of it, or in the fear of

losing it. And how much this is in every one's power, by making resolutions to himself, such as he may keep, is easy for every one to try. Nor let any one say he cannot govern his passions, nor hinder them from breaking out, and carrying him into action; for what he can do before a prince, or a great man, he can do alone, or in the presence of God, if he will.

Superstition.

THE causes of superstition are pleasing and sensual rites and ceremonies; excess of outward and pharisaical holiness; over great reverence of traditions, which cannot but load the church; the stratagems of prelates for their own ambition and lucre; the favoring too much of good intentions, which openeth the gate to conceits and novelties; the taking an aim at divine matters by human, which cannot but breed mixture of imaginations; and lastly barbarous times, especially joined with calamities and disasters. Superstition without a veil is a deformed thing; for as it addeth deformity to an ape to be so like a man, so the similitude of superstition to religion makes it the more deformed: and as wholesome meat corrupteth to little worms, so good forms and orders corrupt into a number

of petty observances. There is a superstition in avoiding superstition when men think to do best if they go farthest from the superstition formerly received ; therefore care should be had that the good be not taken away with the bad, which commonly is done when the people is the reformer.

Atheism.

I HAD rather believe all the fables in the Legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind. And therefore God never wrought a miracle to convince atheism, because his ordinary works convince it. It is true that a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion : for while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them and go no farther ; but when it beholdeth the chain of them, confederate and linked together, it must needs fly to Providence and Deity.

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The Scripture saith, "*The fool hath said in his heart there is no God ;*" it is not said, the fool hath *thought* in his heart. So that he rather saith it by rote

to himself, as what he would have, than that he can thoroughly believe it or be persuaded of it. For none can deny there is a God, but those for whom it maketh that were no God.

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The causes of atheism are divisions in religion, if they be many ; for any one main division addeth zeal to both sides, but many divisions introduce atheism. Another is, scandal of priests. A third is, custom of profane scoffing in holy matters ; which doth by little and little deface the reverence of religion. And lastly, learned times, especially with peace and prosperity : for troubles and adversities do more bow men's minds to religion.

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They that deny God, destroy man's nobility : for certainly man is akin to the beasts by his body ; and if he be not akin to God by his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature. It destroys likewise magnanimity, and the raising of human nature. Man, when he resteth and assureth himself upon divine protection and favors, gathereth a force and faith which human nature of itself could not obtain : therefore as atheism is in all respects hateful, so in this—that it depriveth human nature of the means to exalt itself above human frailty.

Sin and Sins.

THOUGH you may know abundance of people to be guilty of some gross sins with which you cannot charge yourself, yet you may justly condemn yourself as the greatest sinner that you know ; and that for these following reasons :

First, because you know more of the folly of your own heart than you do of other people's, and can charge yourself with various sins that you only know of yourself, and cannot be sure that other people are guilty of them. So that, as you know more of the folly, the baseness, the pride, the deceitfulness, and negligence of your own heart than you do of any one's else, so you have just reason to consider yourself as the greatest sinner that you know, because you know more of the greatness of your own sins than you do of other people's.

Secondly, the greatness of our guilt arises chiefly from the greatness of God's goodness toward us ; from the particular graces and blessings, the favors, the lights, and instructions that we have received from Him. Every sinner knows more of these aggravations of his own guilt than he does of other people's, and consequently may justly look upon himself to be the greatest sinner that he knows. How good God has been to other sinners, what light and instruction he has vouchsafed to them, what blessings and graces they have re-

ceived from him, how often he has touched their hearts with holy inspiration, you cannot tell. But all this you know of yourself; therefore, you know greater aggravations of your own guilt, and are able to charge yourself with greater ingratitude than you can charge upon other people. This is the reason why the greatest saints have in all ages condemned themselves as the greatest sinners.

In order, therefore, to know your own guilt, you must consider your own particular circumstances: your health, your sickness, your youth or age, your particular calling, the happiness of your education, the degrees of light and instruction that you have received, the good men that you have conversed with, the admonitions that you have had, the good books that you have read, the numberless multitude of divine blessings, graces, and favors that you have received, the good motions of grace that you have resisted, the resolutions of amendment that you have often broken, and the checks of conscience that you have disregarded. Perhaps the person so odious in your eyes would have been much better than you are, had he been altogether in your circumstances, and received all the same favors and graces from God that you have.

This is a very humbling reflection, and very proper for those people to make who measure their virtues by comparing the outward course of their lives with that of other people's.

Worldly Policy and Religion.

WORLDLY policy is built wholly upon mistakes ; it proposes to us things under the notion of great and good, which, when we have examined, we find not worth seeking ; and of these it can give us no assurance, whether we respect their acquisition or possession ; and the ways it prescribes to put us in possession of all that satisfaction which results from these things, have something in them so mean, so laborious, so uncertain, so vexatious, that no success can compensate that trouble and shame which the canvassing for them puts us to.

Religion rectifies our opinions and dispels our errors, and routs those armies of imaginary evils which terrify and torment the world much more than spirits and ghosts do ; this discovers to us objects worthy of all the love and admiration of our souls ; this dissipates our guilt and extinguishes our fear ; this shows us the happiness of our present condition, and opens to us a glorious prospect of our future one ; this discovers to us the happy tendency of temporal evils, and the glorious reward of them ; and, in one word, teaches us both to enjoy and suffer ; it moderates our desires of things uncertain, and out of our power, and fixes them upon those things for which we can be responsible ; it raises the mind, clears the reason, and, finally, forms us into such an united, settled, and compacted state of strength,

that neither the judgment is easily shaken, nor the affections hurried by any violent transport or emotion.

Pleasure.

HE that has pleasure in himself is pleased with everything ; and he that wants that pleasure is pleased with nothing : but to think reasonably, and act reasonably, will give a man pleasure in himself ; therefore, to think reasonably, and act reasonably, is the sure way to be happy. To illustrate this argument, it is necessary to consider that the pleasure of a fool flows from those things without himself ; whereas the pleasure of a wise man springs up within himself : the former arises from the bodily senses, the latter from the understanding ; the one is the pleasure of the body, the other of the soul. Now, it is evident that the body has not, at all times, power to communicate its pleasure to the soul ; no ! not even to the soul of the most vicious fool : which makes its pleasures very imperfect ; since they extend to but one half of the man. But the pleasures of the soul never fail to communicate themselves to the body ; and, by that communication, are rendered as perfect as our being is capable of ; because they become the pleasures of the whole man. To give an instance of this :

when envy, anger, grief, or any other passion, disturbs the mind, all the gratifications that can enter by the senses of the body are not able to give it pleasure; nor is the man, under these disturbances of mind, capable of being happy. But, when the mind is freed from all perplexing and disquieting passions, and is at liberty both to think and to act reasonably, without any opposition from the body, such a happy disposition of the soul necessarily diffuses and communicates itself to the body, and gives pleasure to the whole entire man. And, under this pleasing temper of mind, whatsoever portion of pleasure the body is capable of contributing, will considerably raise and increase the stock of happiness, which before was great enough not to stand in need of any addition. Our main care, therefore, must be, not to abandon bodily pleasures that are innocent, and consistent with wisdom and virtue, since they are capable of contributing to our happiness, but to avoid laying in, too lavishly, such stores of them, as may oppress and stifle the supreme reasonable pleasure of the mind; that flame kindled by wisdom, and maintained by virtue, without which it is impossible to enjoy any tolerable or lasting measure of happiness.

Worldly Mirth.

As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart. Prov. xxv. 20. Worldly mirth is so far from curing spiritual grief, that even worldly grief, where it is great and takes deep root, is not allayed but increased by it. A man who is full of inward heaviness, the more he is encompassed about with mirth, it exasperates and enrages his grief the more; like ineffectual weak physic, which removes not the humor, but stirs it and makes it more unquiet. But spiritual joy is seasonable for all estates; in prosperity, it is pertinent to crown and sanctify all other enjoyments, with this which so far surpasses them; and in distress, it is the only *Nepenthe*, the cordial of fainting spirits; so Ps. iv. 7: He hath put joy into my heart. This mirth makes way for itself, which other mirth cannot do. These songs are sweetest in the night of distress.

Asceticism.

THE system of the ascetic is dark and cheerless; but mysticism lives in a sunshine of its own, and dreams of the light of heaven; while the visions of

the ascetic are such as the fear of the devil produces, rather than the love of God.

If the ascetic virtues, or disciplinary virtues, derived from the schools of philosophy (Pythagorean, Platonic, and Stoic), were carried to an extreme in the middle ages, it is most certain that they are at present in a far more grievous disproportion underrated and neglected. The *regula maxima** of the ancients was to conquer the body by abstracting the attention from it. Our maxim is to conciliate the body by attending to it, and counteracting or precluding one set of sensations by another, the servile dependence of the mind on the body remaining the same. Instead of the due subservience of the body to the mind, we hear nothing at present but of health, good digestion, pleasurable state of general feeling, and the like.

True Beauty is of the Soul.

THE body decays, that we may see unveiled the beauty of the soul, for it is not the body wherein beauty lies, but the expression, and the bloom which is shed over its substance by the soul. Now, then, I bid thee love that which makes the body also to appear such as it

* The chief maxim of the ancient practice.

is. And why speak I of death? Nay, even in life itself, I would have thee mark how all is hers that is beautiful. For whether she be pleased, she showers roses over the cheeks; or whether she be pained, she takes that beauty, and involves it all in a dark robe. And if she be continually in mirth, the body improves in condition; if in grief, she renders the same thinner and weaker than a spider's web; if in wrath, she hath made it again abominable and foul; if she show the eye calm, great is the beauty that she bestows; if she express envy, very pale and livid is the hue she sheds over us; if love, abundant the gracefulness she at once confers. Thus in fact many women, not being beautiful in feature, have derived much grace from the soul; others again of brilliant bloom, by having an ungracious soul, have marred their beauty. Consider how a face that is pale grows red, and by the variation of color produces great delight, when there is need of shame and blushing. As, on the other hand, if it be shameless, it makes the countenance more unpleasing than any monster.

For nothing is fairer, nothing sweeter than a beautiful soul. For while as to bodies, the longing is with pain, in the case of souls the pleasure is pure and calm. Why then let go the king, and be wild about the herald? Why leave the philosopher and gape after his interpreter? Hast thou seen a beautiful eye? acquaint thyself with that which is within; and if that

be not beautiful, despise this likewise. For surely, didst thou see an ill-favored woman wearing a beautiful mask, she would make no impression on thee : just as on the other hand, neither wouldest thou suffer one fair and beautiful to be disguised by the mask, but wouldest take it away, as choosing to see her beauty unveiled.

This then I bid thee do in regard of the soul also, and acquaint thyself with it first ; for this is clad with the body instead of a mask ; wherefore also that abides such as it is ; but the other, though it be misshapen, may quickly become beautiful. Though it have an eye that is unsightly, and harsh, and fierce, it may become beautiful, mild, calm, sweet tempered, gentle. This beauty therefore let us seek—this countenance let us adorn, that God may have pleasure in our beauty, and impart to us of His everlasting blessings.

Sympathy.

It requires more of a high Christian temper to rejoice with them that do rejoice, than to weep with them that weep. For this nature itself fulfils perfectly : and there is none so hard hearted as not to weep over him that is in calamity : but the other requires a very noble soul, so as not only to keep from envying, but even to feel pleasure with the person who is in esteem.

And this is why he placed it first. For there is nothing that ties love so firmly as sharing both joy and pain one with another. Do not then, because thou art far from difficulties thyself, remain aloof from sympathizing too. For when thy neighbor is ill treated, thou oughtest to make the calamity thine own. Take share then in his tears, that thou mayest lighten his low spirits. Take share in his joy, that thou mayest make the joy strike deep root, and fix the love firmly, and be of service to thyself rather than to him in so doing, by thy weeping rendering thyself merciful, and, by thy feeling his pleasure, purging thyself of envy and grudging. And let me draw your attention to St. Paul's consideration. For he does not say, put an end to the calamity, lest thou shouldest say in many cases that it is impossible: but he has enjoined the easier task, and that which thou hast in thy power. For even if thou art not able to remove the evil, yet contribute tears, and thou wilt take the worst half away. And if thou be not able to increase a man's prosperity, contribute joy, and thou wilt have made a great addition to it. Therefore it is not abstaining from envy only, but what is a much greater thing, that he exhorts us to—namely joining in the pleasure. For this is a much greater thing than not envying.

Christian Externality.

It is of much importance, not only to retain Christian principle in its integrity, but also to let it appear externally, and allow it to model every, the least circumstance of countenance, manner, dress, in short the whole demeanor. A Christian appearance speaks irresistibly, though silently, to those who would not listen to Christian conversation. It requires an exercised Christian eye to discern grace in another, where no external livery (if I may say) indicates what master we serve, and to whose power alone our help is to be attributed. The world is ever ready to attribute to nature the fruits of grace. Without an external sign, it can scarcely discern the internal spiritual grace.

“ Never man was truly blest,
 But it composed, and gave him such a cast,
 As folly might mistake for want of joy.
 A cast unlike the triumph of the proud ;
 A modest aspect and a smile at heart.”

The Understanding and the Imagination.

NEITHER Roman Catholic Christianity nor Continental Protestantism can fairly and fully engage an

unfettered and cultivated mind. The understanding and the imagination are the two perceptive faculties, and an adequate vehicle of religion must, proportionally, consult both. The Roman Catholic system makes no provision for the understanding. Christianity therefore, in that form, is ever liable to be despised and rejected by the man who claims to think for himself. It gives much to the imagination (not in the best way, however), but absolutely nothing to the understanding; it denies its rights, and professedly aims at their subjugation. Continental Protestantism, on the other hand, whether Lutheran or Calvinist, holds out something, such as it is, to the understanding, but nothing to the imagination. And the consequence is, that refined taste is as much repelled by the Lutheran and Calvinist religions, as the understanding is repelled by the Roman Catholic religion. Instances may be found of eminent laymen being really religious in the Roman Catholic Church, and a still greater number in Lutheran or Calvinist communities. But I believe it is in the Church of England (in which due and proportioned provision is made, both for understanding and imagination) that the closest, most unreserved, and most cordial union has existed between minds of the first order, and the Christian religion.

The Sensitive and the Intellectual.

THERE are some people, whose senses must be impressed with a thing before they can conceive it to exist ; and who, even then, measure all its energies by the sounds which it emits, or the appearances which it exhibits. To such persons, an inward separation from the world is nearly unintelligible ; it must be palpable, and tangible, or they cannot take cognizance of it. The positive marks of piety, too, must be ostensible and striking. If they are confined to the closet, and to the retired walk, they are held problematical. It will, probably, be said, “How can such a person be so very religious, as some say he is, when he acts and speaks so much like other people, and so little resists the customs and practices of the world ?” It is not consciousness, nor want of charity, but it is want of true spiritual perception ; it is that, in the combination of animal and spirit, or of body and mind, the material part got a kind of ascendancy which disposes to a grosser, and indisposes for a more abstract, mode of apprehending things. To such, persons of a decidedly opposite construction will be necessarily unintelligible. If one of that class, we sometimes might be disheartened by it, were it not that the first of incarnate Beings, being eminently formed on the predominantly intellectual plan, nay, most probably, standing at the very head of that

class, has not only given a preference to the unostensible course, in his conduct and maxims, but was himself censured for not being sufficiently rigid and re-cluse.

Certainly, hitherto, the intellectual are the very few ; and the sensitive are the many. The condescending goodness of God, therefore, has, ever since the day of Pentecost, but especially since the death of the Apostles, permitted his holy religion variously to embody itself, and also to assume various sectarian forms. The visible church has obviously owed its magnitude to the former means ; and the invisible church could not have been kept up without the latter. Yet followers of the pure spirit of Christianity never have been wanting ; and they who are such, must feel and be grateful for their invaluable advantage. But they must also patiently and kindly bear with those who belong to that lower and yet necessary order, and do all that can be done to diffuse a better and higher spirit, though still with caution, and all gentleness to those who cannot understand such a design. We do not err in supposing that way at which we aim to be in a more peculiar manner the way marked out by our blessed Lord himself while sojourning in this lower world.

The Ladder.

AN old Carthusian abbot of the 12th century wrote a little tract which he denominated “De Scalâ Claus-trali,” which words mean, “Of the Ladder of the Cloister.” “This,” he says, “consists of four gradations of ascent—reading, meditation, prayer, contemplation. Reading inquires after spiritual happiness; meditation ascertains its nature, its importance to us, and our own utter inability to confer it on ourselves; prayer then asks it from Him who alone can bestow it; and, when our prayer is answered, contemplation exercises itself in the actual enjoyment of the blessing. These steps,” he observes, “are few indeed; but they are of immense comprehensiveness. The lowest of them rests on the earth; but the highest penetrates to the heaven of heavens.” Soberly, there is no way of escaping “the heart-aches, and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to,” but by getting as high up on this ladder as possible.

There is not in the patriarchal history a more impressive story than that favorite one of all young readers, “Jacob’s Ladder.” The forlorn pilgrim, in his accommodations for the night, presents to us the extreme of solitary destitution. But what a light arises in the darkness; what a transit from the lowest of human circumstances to a magnificence before which all

earthly splendor fades into inanity ! It was natural for the astonished Jacob to exclaim, “ How dreadful is this place ! This is none other than the house of God ; this is the gate of heaven.” Doubtless, after this, poor and friendless as, to human appearance, he still was, “ he went on his way rejoicing.” Now, whoever gets possession of the above described ladder, which happily is not that only of the cloister (“ neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem,” &c.), and learns how to use it, has in this the substance and essence of Jacob’s ladder ; and, at every stage of his pilgrimage through this world, has from this possession a real portion of that comfort and support, in his serious, settled reflections and feelings, which the patriarch felt in his ecstatic vision.

Religious Taste.

OUR taste, considered in the most extended sense of the term, is, eminently and essentially, our moral faculty. As our likings are, so are we ourselves. We may know what is right, without carrying it either into feeling or practice. We may do what is right hypocritically, so as to become worse instead of better by doing so ; but if we love what is right, if we have an inward taste for goodness—preferring it, from a heartfelt

pleasure which it gives us, independently of all views of interest, or all merely mercenary hopes and fears,—then, and then only, are we virtuous persons, entitled to estimation here, and sure of bliss hereafter.

Do we, then, wish to ascertain our own real moral character? We must not ask, merely, what are the subjects which engage our thoughts, nor what the business which occupies our time? We may employ our intellect on the very best subjects without cordially loving them; we may be busied in the most useful occupations, in order to entitle ourselves to take pleasure afterward in something else. To this last point, then, must we come. What is it that we look forward to with the strongest bent of desire? What is our predominant taste? Let this question be honestly answered, and we gain a true knowledge of ourselves. In matters of business we may be diligent and correct from mere self-interest. Nay, in matters of duty, we may be punctual, and even rigid, in order to avoid remorse here, or purchase a mercenary heaven hereafter. But in both instances it is necessity, not choice, which shows itself. When business is over, and when stated duties are performed, then come choice and freedom; and then only do we manifest our hearts. If we drop our regularity with our ledger, we have evidently no inward love of correctness; and if we are accustomed to lay aside our pious thoughts with our prayer-book, we clearly like something better than our religion.

In order, therefore, to prove ourselves religious, it is not enough that we appear to practise it; we must also be satisfied that we have a taste for it, nay, that it is our habitual, predominant taste; for less than this cannot be implied in that supreme love of God which the Scripture considers as essential to true religion. Religion is obviously the highest moral habit of which our nature is capable: and it has already been seen that our taste, or our liking, is most directly our moral faculty; consequently, nothing can be clearer than that the highest exercise of this faculty must enter essentially into that which constitutes our highest moral habit; that is, we must relish religion above all things, in order to being religious at all.

Religious Education.

IN adult conversions, nature has already taken the wrong side, and must be subdued; its members have been so misemployed as to be nearly incapable of serving a good purpose; they must, therefore, be mortified—spiritually cut off. But in the yet unsoiled and flexible season of youth, the great object is not to subdue, but to attract and pre-occupy. Imagination being now all alive, and yet wholly unperverted, only let fit means be used, and it may receive such impres-

sions of the sweetness and sublimity of true piety, as it shall never part with. The heart is now at its height of tenderness and susceptibility; but it is neither through the passions nor the reason that it is accessible. The passions would imply a violence, and reason, a stillness, equally uncongenial. It is fancy that reigns; and thoroughly to engage this mainspring of the soul on the side of goodness, is the point indicated by all the movements of nature.

The danger of the world taking the earliest and deepest possession, is felt by all; but it is not generally, if almost at all, considered that this attachment, in the first stage of it, is seated in our natural tastes far more than in our depraved propensities. The world holds out, in the first instance, objects of a pure and innocent love. The opening mind delights in what is brilliant, impressive, animated. The new, the beautiful, the majestic, enchant it in their turns: it thrills and vibrates to every touch of visionary pleasure; and to look abroad, is to meet the means of excitement. I repeat, this is not sin. It soon, deplorably soon, in most cases, becomes sin; but in itself it is nature; the instinct of the young mind, as much as lively motion is of the young body. But why do these feelings so speedily become the wheels and springs of moral evil? I say not, merely because human nature is depraved; for, if this could not be counteracted by proper means, Timothy never would have been what he was from a child, and

St. Paul's exhortation to parents would have been vain. But the true cause is, that religion is so seldom offered to the young mind in a form suitable to these ruling tastes ; and, on the contrary, so often pressed upon it in a form directly opposed to them. Adaptation of religion to the natural feelings of youth is, in general, so far from being thought of, that what is deemed the religious world almost universally rejects the very principle. Their whole system is a professed combat with nature ; efficient methods of conciliating it are, of course, out of the question.

Intemperance.

I.

I HEAR many say, when excesses happen, "Would there were no wine." O folly ! O madness ! When other men sin, dost thou find fault with God's gifts ? And what great madness is this ! What ! did the wine, O man, produce this evil ? Not the wine, but the intemperance of such as take an evil delight in it. Say then, "Would there were no drunkenness, no luxury ;" but if thou say, "Would there were no wine," thou wilt say, going on by degrees, "Would there were no steel, because of the murderers ; no night, because of the thieves ; no light, because of the informers ; no women,

because of adulteries ;” and, in a word, thou wilt destroy all.

But do not so ; for this is of a Satanical mind ; do not find fault with the wine, but with the drunkenness ; and when thou hast found this self-same man sober, sketch out all his unseemliness, and say unto him, Wine was given, that we might be cheerful, not that we might behave ourselves unseemly ; that we might laugh, not that we might be a laughing-stock ; that we might be healthful, not that we might be diseased ; that we might correct the weakness of our body, not cast down the might of our soul.

God honored thee with the gift, why disgrace thyself with the excess thereof ? Hear what St. Paul saith, “ Use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake, and thine often infirmities.” But if that Saint, even when oppressed with disease, partook not of wine until his Teacher suffered him, what excuse shall we have, who are drunken in health ? To him indeed he said, “ Use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake ;” but to each of you who are drunken, He says, “ Use little wine, for it is wont to give birth to sensual and other wicked desires.” But if ye are not willing for these reasons to abstain, at least on account of the despondencies which come of it, and the vexations, do ye abstain. For wine was given for gladness, “ yea, wine maketh glad the heart of man ” : but ye mar even this excellence in it. For what kind of gladness is it to be beside one’s self,

and to have innumerable vexations, and to see all things whirling round, and to be oppressed with giddiness, and, like those who have a fever, to require some who may drench their heads with oil.

These things are said to all, not because all are drunken, God forbid ; but because they who do not drink take no thought of the drunken. Therefore even against you do I rather inveigh, that are in health ; since the Physician too leaves the sick, and addresses his discourse to them that are sitting by them. To you, therefore, do I direct my speech, entreating you neither to be at any time overtaken by this passion, and to draw up as by cords those who have been so overtaken, that they be not found worse than the brutes. For they indeed seek nothing more than what is needful, but these have become even more brutish than they, overpassing the boundaries of moderation. For how much better is the ass than these men ! how much better the dog ! For indeed each of these animals, and of all others also, whether it need to eat, or to drink, acknowledges sufficiency for a limit, and goes not on beyond what it needs ; and though there are innumerable persons to constrain, it will not endure to go on to excess.

In this respect then we are worse even than the brutes, by the judgment not of them that are in health only, but even by our own. For that ye have judged yourselves to be baser than both dogs and apes, is evi-

dent from thence : that these brutes thou dost not compel to partake of food beyond their measure ; and should any one say, “Wherefore?” “Lest I should hurt them,” thou wilt reply. But upon thyself thou bestowest not so much as this forethought. Thus thou accountest thyself viler even than they are, and permittest thyself to be continually tossed as with a tempest.

For neither in the day of drunkenness only dost thou undergo the harm of drunkenness, but also after that day. And as, when a fever is passed by, the mischievous consequences of the fever remain ; so also, when drunkenness is past, the disturbance of intoxication is whirling round both the soul and body ; and while the wretched body lies paralyzed, like the hull of a vessel after a shipwreck, the soul yet more miserable than it, even when this is ended, stirs up the storm, and kindles the desire ; and when one seems to be sober, then most of all he is mad, imagining to himself wine and casks, cups and goblets.

That we suffer not then these things, let us deliver ourselves from that storm. It is not possible with drunkenness to see the kingdom of heaven. Be not deceived : “no drunkards, no revilers shall inherit the kingdom of God.” And why do I speak of a kingdom ? Why, with drunkenness one cannot see so much as the things present. For in truth drunkenness makes the days night to us, and the light darkness. And this is not the only frightful thing, but with these things they

suffer also another most grievous punishment, continually undergoing despondencies, madness, infirmity, ridicule, reproach. What manner of excuse is there for them that pierce themselves through with so many evils? There is none.

II.

An excessive eating or drinking both makes the body sickly and lazy, fit for nothing but sleep, and besots the mind, as it clogs up with crudities the way through which the spirits should pass, bemiring them, and making them move heavily, as a coach in a deep way; thus doth all immoderate use of the world and its delights wrong the soul in its spiritual condition, makes it sickly and feeble, full of spiritual distempers and inactivity, benumbs the graces of the Spirit, and fills the soul with sleepy vapors, makes it grow secure and heavy in spiritual exercises, and obstructs the way and motion of the Spirit of God in the soul. Therefore, if you would be spiritual, healthful and vigorous, and enjoy much of the consolations of Heaven, be sparing and sober in those of the earth, and what you abate of the one, shall be certainly made up of the other.

Riches.

I CANNOT call riches better than the baggage of virtue. The Rôman word is better, "*impedimenta.*" For as the baggage is to an army, so are riches to virtue. It cannot be spared, nor left behind, but it hindereth the march; yea, and the care of it sometimes loseth or disturbeth the victory.

Great riches have sold more men than they have bought. Seek not proud riches; but such as thou mayst get justly, use soberly, distribute cheerfully, and leave contentedly. Yet have no abstract or friarly contempt of them.

The ways to enrich are many, and most of them foul. Parsimony is one of the best, and yet is not innocent: for it withholdeth men from works of liberality and charity.

Be not penny-wise: riches have wings; and sometimes they fly away of themselves; sometimes they must be set flying to bring in more.

Believe not much them which seem to despise riches: for they despise them that despair of them; and none worse when they come to them.

Sentimental Benevolence.

SENTIMENTAL benevolence really feels for the disorders which afflict humanity, at least while it lasts ; it really desires to relieve them, and sets about reforming some of the external and more prominent evils, in the hope that, if they are cured, those of lesser note fleet away, and society in the end will be righted. Sin is regarded as accidental, rather than radical—an *excuse*, rather than a *cause* ; poverty, a penalty for wealth, rather than a consequence of idleness and unthrift ; restraint, discipline, and punishment, the inexorable decrees of the few, instead of the necessary safeguards for the many ; reformation of institutions is more aimed at than regeneration of principles. But it is found to be a far more difficult and perplexing work than was counted for : it is like stopping the leaks of an old building with sand ; it gets soon discouraged at the hopeless nature of its task ; yet, unwilling to abandon it, still anxious to seem to do, even when it knows not what to do or where to begin, it runs to find fault with those who continue patiently laboring, because so much still remains to be done, and rail at their instruments without offering them better. The truth is, this philanthropy springs from the natural sensibilities and sympathies of the heart, which are amiable rather than efficient, self-loving rather than self-sacrificing, the pa-

rent of feeling more than of principle, partaking more of the demagogue than the true patriot.

The disordered state of the world, it must be confessed, is painful and perplexing in the extreme ; but the disease lies at the heart and in the core of society, and there is no love for man, but that which springs from love to God, which is strong and faithful enough to work for his salvation. The maxims, motives, and aims which control man are wrong, and nothing but the reception of those principles which God has given in the gospel of his Son can essentially improve his inward, or better his outward condition.

Christian Benevolence.

THE present age may justly be called the age of benevolence. Liberality flows with a full tide through a thousand channels. There is scarcely a newspaper that does not record some meeting of men of fortune for the most salutary purposes. The noble and numberless structures for the relief of distress, which are the ornaments and glory of our land, proclaim species of munificence unknown to former ages.

Allowing the boasted superiority of modern benevolence, it might be well to inquire whether the dif-

fusion of this branch of charity, though the most lovely offspring of religion, be yet any positive proof of the prevalence of religious principle; and whether it be not the fashion rather to consider benevolence as a substitute for Christianity than as an evidence of it?

It seems to be one of the reigning errors among some, to reduce all religion into benevolence, and all benevolence into alms-giving. The wide and comprehensive idea of Christian charity is compressed into the slender compass of a little pecuniary relief. This species of benevolence is indeed a bright gem among the ornaments of a Christian, but by no means furnishes all the jewels of a crown which derives its lustre from the associated radiance of every Christian grace.

The mere casual benevolence of any man can have little claim to solid esteem; nor does any charity deserve the name which does not grow out of a steady conviction that it is his bounden duty; which does not spring from a settled propensity to obey the whole will of God; which is not therefore made a part of the general plan of his conduct; and which does not lead him to order the whole scheme of his affairs with an eye to it.

He, therefore, who does not habituate himself to certain interior restraints, who does not live in a regular course of self-renunciation, will not be likely often to perform acts of beneficence, when it becomes necessary to convert to such purposes any of that time or money

which appetite, temptation, or vanity solicit him to divert to other purposes.

And surely he who seldom sacrifices one darling indulgence, who does not abstract one gratification from the incessant round of his enjoyments, when the indulgence would obstruct his capacity for doing good, or when the sacrifice would enlarge his power, does not deserve the name of *benevolent*. And for such an unequivocal criterion of charity, to whom are we to look but to the conscientious Christian? No other spirit but that by which he is governed can subdue self-love; and where self-love is the predominant passion, benevolence can have but a feeble or an accidental dominion.

Now if we look around and remark the excesses of luxury, the costly amusements, and the intemperate dissipation in which numbers of professing Christians indulge, can any stretch of candor, can even that tender sentiment by which we are enjoined "to hope" and to "believe all things," enable us to hope and believe that such are actuated by a spirit of Christian benevolence, merely because we see them perform some casual act of charity, which the spirit of the world can contrive to make extremely compatible with a voluptuous life, and the cost of which, after all, bears but little proportion to that of any one vice, or even vanity?

Good Works.

I.

THERE are who have impropriated to themselves the names of zealous, sincere, and reformed, as if all others were cold minglers of holy things and profane, and friends of abuses. Yea, be a man endued with great virtues, and fruitful in good works, yet if he concur not with them, they term him, in derogation, a civil and moral man, and compare him to Socrates, or some heathen philosopher; whereas the wisdom of the Scriptures teacheth us otherwise—namely, to judge and denominate men religious according to their works of the second table; because those of the first are often counterfeit, and practised in hypocrisy. St. John saith, that “a man doth vainly boast of loving God whom he never saw, if he love not his brother whom he hath seen:” and St. James saith, “This is true religion, to visit the fatherless and the widow.” So as that which is with them but philosophical and moral, is, in the apostle’s phrase, true religion and Christianity.

II.

Let not the hope of any worldly advantage, nor the affection thou bearest to any creature, prevail upon thee to do that which is evil. For the benefit of him, however, who stands in need of relief, a customary good

work may sometimes be intermitted ; for, in such a case, that good work is not annihilated, but incorporated with a better.

Without charity, that is *love*, the external work profiteth nothing ; but whatever is done from charity, however trifling and contemptible in the opinion of men, is wholly fruitful in the acceptance of God, who regardeth more the degree of love with which we act, than what or how much we have performed. He doeth much, who loveth much ; he doeth much, who doeth well ; and he doeth much and well, who constantly preferreth the good of the community to the gratification of his own will. Many actions, indeed, assume the appearance of charity, that are wholly selfish and carnal ; for inordinate affection, self-will, the hope of reward, and the desire of personal advantage and convenience, are the common motives that influence the conduct of men.

He that has true and perfect charity “seeketh not his own” in anything, but seeketh only that “God may be glorified in all things ;” he “envieth not,” for he desires no private gratification : he delighteth not in himself, nor in any created being, but wishes for that which is infinitely transcendent, to be blest in the enjoyment of God : he ascribes not good to any creature, but refers it absolutely to God ; from whom, as from its fountain, all good originally flows ; in whom, as in their centre, all saints will finally rest.

The True Use of Wealth.

IF thou wouldest have God for thy friend continually, make Him thy Debtor to a large amount. For there is no lender so pleased at having those that owe to Him, as Christ is rejoiced at having those that lend to Him. And such as He oweth nothing to, He fleeth from ; but such as he oweth to, He even runneth unto. Let us then use all means to get Him for our Debtor ; for this is the season for loans, and He is now in want. If then thou givest not unto Him now, He will not ask of thee after thy departing hence. For it is here that He thirsteth—here that He is an hungered. Since He thirsteth when He thirsteth after thy salvation ; and it is for this that He even begs ; for this that He even goeth about naked, negotiating immortal life for thee. Do not then neglect Him ; since it is not to be nourished that He wishes, but to nourish ; it is not to be clothed, but to clothe and to accoutre thee with the golden garment, the royal robe. Christ comes to thee in a lowly guise, and with his right hand held forth. And if thou givest him a farthing, He turneth not away : and even if thou rejectest Him, He cometh again to thee. For He desireth, yea desireth exceedingly, our salvation : let us then think scorn of money, that we may not be thought scorn of by Christ. Let us think scorn of money, even with the view to obtain

the money itself. For if we keep it here, we shall lose it altogether both here and hereafter. But if we distribute it with abundant expenditure, we shall enjoy in each life abundant wealthiness. He then that would become rich, let him become poor, that he may be rich. Let him spend, that he may collect; let him scatter, that he may gather. But if this is novel and paradoxical, look to the sower, and consider that he cannot in any other way gather more together, save by scattering what he hath, and letting go of what is at hand. Let us now sow and till the Heaven, that we may reap with great abundance, and obtain everlasting goods.

Heavenly and Earthly Usury.

WHEN our Saviour said, *Make to yourselves friends*, He did not stop at this only, but He added, *of the unrighteous mammon*; that so again the good work may be thine own; for it is nothing else but almsgiving which He hath here signified. And, what is marvellous, neither doth he make a strict account with us, if we withdraw ourselves from injustice. For what he saith is like this: "Hast thou gained ill? spend well. Hast thou gained by unrighteousness? scatter abroad in righteousness." And yet, what manner of virtue is this, to give out of such gains? God, however, being

full of love to man, condescends even to this, and if we thus do, promises many good things. But we are so past all feeling, as not to give even of our unjust gain, but while plundering without end, if we contribute the smallest part, we think we have fulfilled all. Hast thou not heard Paul saying, "He which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly?" Wherefore then dost thou spare? What, is the act an outlay? is it an expense? Nay, it is gain and good merchandise. Where there is merchandise, there is also increase; where there is sowing, there is also reaping. But thou, if thou hadst to till a rich and deep soil, and capable of receiving much seed, wouldest both spend what thou hadst, and wouldest borrow of other men, accounting parsimony in such cases to be loss; but, when it is Heaven which thou art to cultivate, which is exposed to no variation of weather, and will surely repay thine outlay with abundant increase, thou art slow and backward, and considerest not that it is possible by sparing to lose, and by not sparing to gain.

Disperse therefore, that thou mayest not lose; keep not, that thou mayest keep; lay out, that thou mayest save; spend that thou mayest gain. If thy treasures are to be hoarded, do not thou hoard them, for thou wilt surely cast them away; but intrust them to God, for thence no man makes spoil of them. Do not then traffic, for thou knowest not at all how to gain; but lend unto Him who gives an interest greater than the

principal. Lend, where is no envy, no accusation, nor evil design, nor fear. Lend unto Him who wants nothing, yet hath need for thy sake ; who feeds all men, yet is an hungered, that thou mayest not suffer famine ; who is poor, that thou mayest be rich. Lend there, where thy return cannot be death, but life instead of death. For this usury is the harbinger of a kingdom, that of hell ; the one coming of covetousness, the other of self-denial ; the one of cruelty, the other of humanity. What excuse then will be ours when, having the power to receive more, and that with security, and in due season, and in great freedom, without either reproaches, or fears, or dangers, we let go these gains, and follow after that other sort, base and vile as they are, insecure and perishable, and greatly aggravating the furnace for us ? For nothing, nothing is baser than the usury of this world, nothing more cruel. Why, other persons' calamities are such a man's traffic ; he makes himself gain of the distress of another, and demands wages for kindness, as though he were afraid to seem merciful, and under the cloak of kindness he digs the pitfall deeper, by the act of help galling a man's poverty, and in the act of stretching out the hand thrusting him down, and when receiving him as in harbor, involving him in shipwreck, as on a rock, or shoal, or reef.

“ But what dost thou require ? ” saith one ; “ that I should give another for his use that money which I

have got together, and which is to me useful, and demand no recompense?" Far from it; I say not this: yea, I earnestly desire that thou shouldest have a recompense; not however a mean or small one, but far greater; for in return for gold, I would that thou shouldest receive Heaven for usury. Why then shut up thyself in poverty, crawling about the earth, and demanding little for great? Nay, this is the part of one who knows not how to be rich. For when God in return for a little money is promising thee the good things that are in Heaven, and thou sayest, "Give me not Heaven, but instead of Heaven, the gold that perisheth," this is for one who wishes to continue in poverty. Even as he surely who desires wealth and abundance will choose things abiding rather than things perishing; the inexhaustible rather than such as waste away; much rather than little; the incorruptible rather than the corruptible. For so the other sort too will follow. For as he who seeks earth above Heaven, will surely lose earth also, so he that prefers heaven to earth, shall enjoy both in great excellency. And that this may be the case with us, let us despise all things here, and choose the good things to come. For thus shall we obtain both the one and the other, by the grace and love toward man of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Conversation.

CONVERSATION, instead of being an assistance to us in our endeavors after happiness, generally tends to promote our misery. Philosophy is not now the business of conversation, nor is friendship any way useful or serviceable to the great end of life : the ligament of society is riot and revelling, or sordid profit and interest, or peradventure folly, trifling and impertinence : these are the ties and bonds of our confederacies ; so that whatever authority our friends and acquaintances have over us, whatever influence they have upon us, is employed to no other purpose, but to recommend and endear vice to us, to render it, if not beautiful and lovely to us, at least wise, less deformed and repulsive than it is. Hence it is that retirement is so generally recommended to those who design to make any progress in true wisdom ; and such as are truly virtuous do so passionately complain of the disadvantages they suffer by conversing with the world : for the truth is wisdom and goodness are such unfashionable themes of discourse, such unusual, unwelcome subjects of entertainment, that the company deserves now to be praised, which is only barren and unprofitable, not hurtful.

What ought to be the tie and ligaments of friendship, what the rules of conversation, and what the

great ends of society, is abundantly manifest from the nature of that happiness which it behoves us to propose as the great end of life : what is the great end of man ought to be the design of society ; therefore it is plain, that wisdom and virtue ought to be the foundation and bond of those friendships which we enter into, voluntary and choice ; that conversation should be so regulated, that we may grow by it more wise and virtuous ; that our discourse, if it be not profitable, should be innocent ; and that we should do and say nothing in company which we should have reason to blush at or repent of in private.

Religious Conversation.

NEXT to conversation with God by prayer, the conversation of good men does wonderfully contribute to the building us up in faith and virtue. How does the sense and experience of such as deserve our esteem and affection, settle and establish our judgment when they concur with us ! How does their knowledge enlighten us, their reason strengthen our faith, and their example inflame us with emulation ! A pious friendship renders religion itself more engaging : it sanctifies our very diversions and recreations, and makes them min-

ister to virtue ; it minds us when we are forgetful, supports and encourages us when we faint and tire, improves and corrects us when we give back, and recalls us in the right path when we go out of it. This is, or this should be, the business of conversation, the end and advantage of friendship ; we should be often talking together of the things of God, communicating and laying open the state of our souls, our fears, our hopes, our improvements and defects ; we should watch over one another, comfort and support one another ; our discourse should always administer new warmth, or new strength to our holy faith and love.

Conversation has a lively influence on our minds, and always kindles in the soul a gentle heat. And did we but accustom ourselves to entertain one another with discourse about another world ; did we mingle the praises of God with the feasts and joys of life ; did we retire to our country houses to contemplate the variety and riches of Divine wisdom and bounty in those natural scenes of pleasure which the country affords, and did we now and then invite our friends to join with us in offering up hallelujahs to God on this account, with brightness and serenity, what calm and pleasure would this diffuse through all our souls, through all our days.

Conversation is not always a loss, but sometimes a gain of time ; it is another way by which we learn to know ourselves, and by which conscience is kept awake

and in its vigor. We often need to have our forgetfulness relieved, our drowsiness awakened by the discourses and reflections of our friends. If discourse were generally seasoned with grace, conversation would be the greatest blessing ; if with sense and reason, innocence and prudence, it would be the most agreeable entertainment of human life. But how mischievous is the acquaintance which infects us with vanity and lightness of spirit, which shows us nothing but a gaudy outside and a frothy soul ! whose example binds men in civility to be foolish, and makes confidence, and vice, and misspent time, a fashion.

Intercourse with the World.

“OPEN not thine heart to every man ;” but intrust its secrets to him only that is wise, and feareth God. Be seldom in the company of young men and strangers. Flatter not the rich ; nor affect to be seen in the presence of the great. Associate chiefly with the humble and simple, the holy and devout ; and let thy conversation with them be on subjects that tend to the perfection of thy spirit. Wish to be familiar with God, and His holy angels, but shun the notice and intimacy of men ; charity is due to all, but familiarity is the right of none.

It often happens, that a stranger, whom the voice of fame had made illustrious, loses the brightness of his character the moment he is seen and known : we hope to please others by entering into familiar connections with them ; and we presently disgust them by the evil qualities and irregular behavior which they discover in us.

As much as lies in thy power, shun the resorts of worldly men ; for much conversation on secular business, however innocently managed, greatly retards the progress of the spiritual life. We are soon captivated by vain objects and employments, and soon defiled ; and I have wished a thousand times that I had either not been in company, or had been silent.

If it be asked, why we are so fond of mixing in the familiar and unprofitable conversations of the world, from which we seldom return to silence and recollection without defilement and compunction, it must be answered, because we seek all our consolation in the present life, and therefore hope, by the amusements of company, to efface the impressions of sorrow ; and because of those things that we most love and desire, and of those that we most hate and would avoid, we are fond of thinking and speaking. But alas ! how deceitful is this artificial management ! for the hope of consolation from outward life utterly destroys that inward and divine consolation which the Holy Spirit gives us.

and which is the only support of the soul under all its troubles. Let us, therefore, watch and pray without ceasing, that no part of our invaluable time may be thus sacrificed to vanity and sin : and wherever it is proper and expedient to speak, let us speak those things that are holy, by which Christians “edify one another.”

An evil habit of negligence and inattention to our growth in grace, is the principal cause of our keeping no guard upon our lips. Spiritual conferences, however, are highly serviceable to spiritual improvement, especially when persons of one heart and one mind associate together in the fear and love of God.

Social Intercourse.

I.

MEN, in what is called society, come out to play an artificial part. They are elaborate in their efforts to avoid diving below the surface. It is hardly counted good-breeding, to attempt getting at a man's real opinions. Mind is not put to mind. Conversation is a fencing match with foils ; it is a game in which, whatever dexterity or skill may be employed, the stakes are only

counters. All this I have often acutely felt. All has been animated around me, but I have been saddened into silence ; and when I have escaped from the insipidity of a dinner company, where there was no lack either of gaiety or talent, I have felt myself brought into society *indeed*, among my books and papers. It is then that I have most relished the recorded table talk of other times ; and it is then especially that I have recalled, with mingled melancholy and satisfaction, the hours which I have passed with you, and with a few more,

“ Who soothed my morbid cares, and made them light ;
And, with their sweet discourse, beguiled the tedious night.”

I know that society must be gradually improved by kindly tolerance of what we cannot at once make conformable, in all respects, to our wishes ; and that, wherever with safety, with innocence, and without descending from a high moral tone and standard, we can enter into the circle, however limited, in which our lot is providentially cast, we may and ought to be unfastidiously cheerful ; watching and improving every fair opportunity of judiciously scattering thoughts which may prove a seed of good. Our great Example was often thrown,—I should rather say, often placed Himself, among associates of very scanty promise ; but we never in any instance see Him fastidious, reserved, or

austere. There is hilarity in all His conversation. His table talk is inimitably what it ought to be ; and taken merely as a matter of taste, would be most worthy the closest attention of those who desire to excel in conversation. Is it not a wondrous privilege, that we have most faithfully recorded *the spoken words* of Him who spake as never man spake ? Assuredly we shall be accountable for our improvement of them, even in our social intercourse. And they who best improve them in this respect, shall become best qualified to be, in the best sense, “*Deliciæ humani generis.*”

II.

I am amazed at people's talking of doing good in company : when they first begin to talk solid connected sense in company, then next it may be expected that some good will be done. But I cannot imagine that nonsense and unconnected chit-chat can do good to any one. And, beyond these, how seldom does the conversation of either a mixed or numerous company advance ! I must say, it is not religion alone that makes me shun company : it is, also, that my intellect may not be suspended. I love good sense ; I love conversation ; but company, so called, is the grave of conversation, and common talk its winding sheet. Those who spend many of their evenings in common companies, or any in them from pure choice, have, I think, a poor

mental taste ; to urge nothing about the immortal spirit, to which such a method of life administers slow poison.

I do not promise myself pleasure from being in company. I say pleasure, because really I have none in dull, mawkish sittings together of human beings. I do feel myself so much an immortal spirit, that I wish to live as like one here as I can ; and I seldom feel myself more unlike one, than when I can neither think aloud nor silently : not the last, because there are sufficient living objects before me to produce excitement ; not the first, because those living objects are not alive enough to think along with me.

I hope there is no impudence in this : I am sure I mean none. I even persuade myself that such epicurism as I have been avowing (which is, I conceive, the epicurism of that taste which we are born to cultivate), would tend powerfully to correct society. For, were it understood that there were qualifications for intercourse, and were it further known that no one need wholly want these if he took the proper method of acquiring them, it seems to be likely that the state of things would mend apace. But how is this ever to be discovered, if some individuals have not the courage, either directly or indirectly, to declare that they deem a score of people assembled in a drawing room, without any attempt to contribute to one another's rational pleasure or moral improvement, a set of self-made sim-

pletons. Positively, if I thought the thing incurable, out of downright good-nature I should hold my tongue. But because I think things may, by proper management, be placed on a better footing, I allow myself to speak out.

Worldly Compliances.

I do most entirely believe, and it is my earnest desire to grow more and more in the feeling, that Christianity, in its power and sweetness, cannot reside where worldly compliances exist. The ordinary amusements of the world constitute a deadly and a blighting atmosphere; deadly to all plants of the true heavenly growth; blighting even to the growth of mere human virtue: and thus feeling, I would maintain the most uniform, undeviating, uncompromising strictness, in my practice, and in my language. The truth is, I conceive it to be more vitally important than ever, that not a shadow of support should be, directly or indirectly, afforded to the low and sickly pursuits of worldly pleasure. The friends of moral Christianity should now be peculiarly strict, because the advocates of dogmatic Christianity are now most shamefully compromising. They appear to have discovered that religionism has ever been more repulsive and unpalatable through its

strictness of moral abstinence than through its strangeness of doctrinal assertion. And, with a wisdom not assuredly from above, whilst they retain their dogmatism, they abate their strictness.

Amusement.

I.

THE habit of dissipating every serious thought by a succession of agreeable sensations, is as fatal to happiness as to virtue; for when amusement is uniformly substituted for objects of moral and mental interest, we lose all that elevates our enjoyments above the scale of childish pleasures; each individual learns to consider himself as the sole spectator of the great drama of life; and he sits and beholds, laughs and mocks, enjoys or yawns through a worthless existence; then sinks into the grave despised and forgotten.

II.

It is incumbent upon Christians to acquire such a tranquillity and elevation of mind, as well as such a tender and delicate apprehension of all appearance of evil, as to determine to avoid, from taste no less than from conscience, such amusements and such inter-

course as have a tendency to draw the heart and affections from God. I have long thought that Beattie's picture of the young Edwin shunning such scenes from pure poetry of soul, has something in it as beautiful as it is just: and, doubtless, pure poetry and vital piety are wonderfully akin to each other. "Religion," says the ingenious Mrs. Barbauld, "may be considered as a taste, an affair of sentiment and feeling; and in this sense it is properly called devotion. Its seat is in the imagination and the passions; and it has its source in that relish for the sublime, the vast, and the beautiful, by which we taste the charms of poetry and other compositions which address our finer feelings." In this there is most substantial truth; and, therefore, wherever this taste prevails, it will show itself in instances not much unlike what Beattie has described:

"Responsive to the sprightly pipe, when all
In sprightly dance the village youth were joined,
Edwin, of melody, age held in thrall
From the rude gambol far remote, reclined,
Soothed with the soft notes warbling in the wind.
Oh! then all jollity seemed noise and folly
To the pure soul by Fancy's fire refined.
Ah! what is mirth but turbulence unholy,
When with the charm compared of heavenly melancholy?"

It is needless to add that melancholy here means only pensiveness.

The Opera.

“ Bear me, some god, O quickly bear me hence
To wholesome solitude, the nurse of sense.”

This apostrophe broke from me on coming from the opera—the first I ever *did*, the last, I trust, I ever *shall* go to. For what purpose has the Lord of the universe made His creature man with a comprehensive mind? why make him a little lower than the angels? why give him the faculty of thinking, the powers of wit and memory, and to crown all, an immortal never-dying spirit? Why all this wondrous waste, this prodigality of bounty, if the mere animal senses of sight and hearing—by which he is not distinguished from the brutes that perish—would have answered the end as well? and yet I find that the same people are seen at the opera every night, an amusement written in a language the greater part of them do not understand, and performed by such a set of beings. But the man

“ Who bade the reign commence
Of rescued nature and reviving sense,”

sat by my elbow, and reconciled me to my situation, not by his approbation, but his presence. Going to the opera, like getting drunk, is a sin that carries its own punishment with it, and that a very severe one. Thanks

to my dear Dr. Stonehouse for his kind and seasonable admonitions. Conscience had done its office before, nay, was busy at the time ; and if it did not dash the cup of pleasure to the ground, infused at least a tincture of wormwood into it. I *did* think of the alarming call, “ What doest thou here, Elijah ? ” and I thought of it to-night at the opera.

The Theatre.

I.

I WAS led to entertain what I must now think a delusive hope, that the stage, under certain regulations, might be converted into a school of virtue ; that though a bad play would always be a bad thing, yet the representation of a good one might become not only harmless, but useful. On these grounds I attempted some theatrical compositions, which, whatever other defects might be justly imputed to them, should at least be written on the side of virtue and modesty, and which should neither hold out any corrupt image to the mind nor any impure description to the fancy. . . .

. There almost inevitably runs through the whole web of the tragic drama a prominent thread of false principle. It is generally the leading object of the poet to erect a standard of *honor*, in direct opposition to the standard of Chris-

tianity. Worldly honor is the very soul and spirit and life-giving principle of the drama. It is her moral and political law. Fear and shame are the capital crimes in her code. Love, jealousy, hatred, ambition, pride, revenge, are too often elevated into the rank of splendid virtues, and form a dazzling system of worldly morality in direct contradiction to the spirit of Christianity. The fruits of the Spirit and the fruits of the stage, if the parallel were followed up, would exhibit as pointed a contrast as human imagination could conceive.

If harmless merriment be not expected to *advance* our moral improvement, we must take care that it do not oppose it; for if we concede that our amusements are not expected to make us better than we are, ought we not to be careful that they do not make us worse than they find us? Whatever pleasantry of idea or gayety of sentiment we admit, should we not jealously watch against any unsoundness in the general principle or mischief in the prevailing tendency?

Between seeing and reading a dramatic composition there is a substantial difference; the objections which lie so strongly against the one, are not, at least in the same degree, applicable to the other. While there is an essential and inseparable danger attendant on dramatic exhibitions, the danger in *reading* a play arises solely from the improper *sentiments* contained in it. It is the semblance of real action which is given to the piece by different persons supporting the different parts, and by

their dress, tones, and gestures, heightening the representation into a kind of enchantment. It is the pageantry, the splendor of the spectacle, and even the show of the spectators—these are the circumstances which fill the theatre, produce the effect, and create the danger. These give a pernicious force to sentiments which, when read, may merely explain the mysterious action of the human heart, but which, when thus uttered and accompanied, become contagious and destructive. These, in short, make up a scene of temptation and seduction, of overwrought voluptuousness and unnerving pleasure, which ill accords with a desire to be enlightened by the doctrines, or governed by the principles, of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

What the stage might be under another and imaginary state of things, it is not very easy for us to know, and therefore not very important to inquire. Nor is it the soundest logic to argue on the possible goodness of a thing which, in the present circumstances of society, is doing positive evil, from the imagined good that it might be conjectured to produce in a supposed state of unattainable improvement ; for unfortunately nothing can be done until not only the stage itself has undergone complete purification, but until the audience shall be purified also. We must first suppose a state of society in which the spectators will be disposed to relish all that is pure, and to reprobate all that is corrupt, before the system of a pure

and uncorrupt theatre can be adopted with any reasonable hope of success : there must always be a harmony between the taste of the spectator and the nature of the spectacle, in order to produce pleasure ; for people go to a play not to be instructed, but to be amused.

Let us ponder seriously these propositions—there is perhaps no question more difficult to settle than what amusements are compatible with the true Christian life. We point to the following principles laid down to Wesley by his mother as a safe guide : “ Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things ; in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is *sin* to you, however innocent it may be in itself.”

II.

“ LET us pull down the Stage,” say some. Would that it were possible to pull it down ; or rather, if ye be willing, as far as regards us, it is pulled down, and digged up. Nevertheless, I enjoin no such thing. Standing as these places are, I bid you make them of no effect ; which thing were a greater praise than pulling them down.

Imitate at least the barbarians, if no one else ; for they verily are altogether clean from seeking such sights. What excuse can we have after this, we, the citizens of Heaven, and partners in the choirs of the Cherubim, and in fellowship with the Angels, making ourselves in this respect worse even than the barbarians, and this, when innumerable other pleasures, better than these, are within our reach.

Why, if thou desirest that thy soul may find delight, go to pleasure grounds, to a river flowing by, and to lakes ; take to gardening, be continually by the death bed of saints, where is health of body and benefit of soul, and no hurt, no remorse after the pleasure, as there is here.

Thou hast a wife ; thou hast children ; what is equal to this pleasure ? Thou hast a house ; thou hast friends ; these are the true delights : besides their purity, great is the advantage they bestow.

“What, then,” one may say, “if I point to some who are nothing hurt by their pastime in that place ?” In the first place, even this is a hurt, to spend one’s time without object or fruit, and to become an offence to others. For even if thou shouldst not be hurt, thou makest some other more eager therein. And how canst thou but be thyself hurt, giving occasion to what goes on ? Yea, all workers of iniquity, and all those choirs of the Devil, cast upon thy head the blame of their proceedings. For surely, as, if there were no spectators,

there would be none to follow these employments ; so, since there are, they too have their share of the fire due to such deeds. So that even in chastity thou wert quite unhurt (a thing impossible), yet for others' ruin thou wilt render a grievous account ; both the spectators' and that of those who assemble them.

And in chastity too thou wouldst profit more, didst thou refrain from going thither. For if even now thou art chaste, thou wouldst have become chaster by avoiding such sights. Let us not then delight in useless argument, nor devise unprofitable apologies : there being but one apology,—to flee from the Babylonian furnace, to keep far from the Egyptian harlot, though one must escape her hands naked.

III.

It is related of Sir Matthew Hale, that he was so much corrupted by seeing many plays, that he almost wholly forsook his studies. By this he not only lost much time, but found that his head came to be thereby filled with vain images of things ; that they were at least unprofitable, if not hurtful to him : and, being afterward sensible of the mischief of this, he resolved never to see a play again ; to which resolution he constantly adhered. A similar fact is related of the cele-

brated Brindley, the civil engineer. He was once prevailed upon to go to a play. Never before having been present at such an entertainment, it had a powerful effect; and he complained that for several days it so deranged his ideas as to render him quite unfit for business. He determined, therefore, that he would never on any account visit the theatre again.

Union of Christianity and Refined Taste.

THE imagination can never rightly perform its functions without taste, without the power which directs it to its proper sphere,—the beautiful. The latter faculty is doubtless connected with the physical organization, the ear; but the inner soul must be its real seat, though reached only through the organs of sense. On this principle there will be an original power of taste, just as of judgment and understanding; and this power may be as susceptible of education and training as the others. This being the case, there can be no training and education equal to religion,—the influence of divine grace purifying the soul from the grossness of corruption and sin. It should never be forgotten that the spiritual and divine present an idea of beauty as well as of holiness. But with the majority of true Chris-

tians, it must be acknowledged, and without blame, that no disposition exists to separate the two,—to look at the “beauties of holiness” æsthetically, and compare them with the beauties of the world of sense. This course has produced many most estimable men,—men who have been the ornaments of religion and the benefactors of their age. Let us not mistake them. They are not devoid of taste, but the range of their taste is the spiritual alone. Many in the lower conditions of life possess this gift, and, amidst their daily toils and privations, their cares and sorrows, are in possession of a delicate sense of the excellencies of religion. Still it by no means follows that the study of nature is to be excluded, or that Christianity is irreconcilable with art. In the ears of the Christian, music is the voice of God; and to his vision, the different forms of life, the orders of created things, the hues and colors flung in rich profusion around, the infinite diversities of beauty, are the embodiment of His glorious perfections. Neither is religion an enemy to art. Indeed, she has contributed more to it than anything else. Take away the *religious* from art, and little of value would be left. The æsthetic principle, through all the languages it has uttered,—poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture, and music,—has striven after a spiritual ideal. It is rooted in religion; without this it could find no adequate development.

But have not the arts been prostituted to supersti-

tious and idolatrous purposes? Have they not been given up to the world, and by common consent excluded from the evangelical system? An affirmative answer must be returned. Whether this state of things should be, is another question. We are of opinion that the evangelical canon admits of the appropriation of all belonging to taste and imagination; and that the kingdom of God embraces all that is beautiful, as well as what is "lovely and of good report." Nay we go further, and say that the Holy Scriptures contain the elements of true science, the models of the most exquisite art, and the most perfect examples of poetic beauty and sublimity to be found in human language.

To give up the regions of taste and art to the world, is to abandon much of all that interests and engages the human mind to the enemies of religion. It is perfectly Utopian to imagine that men, as at present constituted, will ever resign these things. It would require a new formation of human nature to detach it from the sphere of the beautiful: its innate taste, its passions and sensations, its imaginative faculties, must necessarily attach it to the region of art. Then, as nature cannot be changed, would it not be judicious in the lovers of sacred things to carry the purity and truth of the Divine into these departments? If religion is to progress in the world, must it not bring everything into its own element? Will the world be less scientific when it is more enlightened? Can it be supposed that taste,

imagination, and art will be barbarized by the advance of knowledge and the elevation of our race? Will the souls of men be less poetic by becoming more pure, believing, and replete with love? Is it possible for the echoes of melody to be less impassioned, and the world less jubilant, by its increased enjoyment of God and the blessings of salvation? To suppose an affirmative reply to these queries, is to suppose that science and art are not laid in the depths of nature, but are merely an accident.

The solution awaiting the social and political world is the acceptance of the Gospel as the basis of society; and the solution awaiting the sensuous world is the acceptance of Christianized art in the place of its corrupt rival. Does the social state admit of the *morale* of the Gospel passing into its domains? of modifying all legislation, all law, all government, all international transactions, all commercial affairs, and all domestic arrangements? Does it admit of human life becoming the embodiment of Christian faith, wisdom, holiness, instead of being the embodiment of selfishness, pride, passion, avarice, and chicanery? If not, then the world must go in its old track of war, anarchy, tyranny, and misery; if it is, then we have the prospect of a regenerate earth,—of peace, justice, good-will, love, and brotherhood. Again we ask, Is the Gospel competent to refine and purify the souls of men? because, if so, taste and imagination—the parent of all that we

have referred to—must partake the purifying process. We do not say, “destroy taste and imagination;” for, in reality, religion does not destroy the faculties, but refines them. Time must solve this problem; but in truth, if religion cannot enter this region, if it cannot take hold of the sentient in man,—if it cannot sing as sweetly, paint as vividly, model as truly, and poetize as tenderly and sublimely as the old artists,—then, infallibly, the human race must remain under the dominion of its old masters.

We entertain no such notion. There is scope enough in religion for the full and eternal development of whatever is true in taste. We do not desire to see Christianity adopt the practice of the sensuous world, as the Jesuits put on the dress and imitated the manners of the Brahmins; but what we do wish to see is, the establishment of a Christian system of art, of so elevated a nature as to have the effect of rescuing the minds of men of taste and refinement from the purlieus of vice. But the ancient and only true models remain. Yes, these models remain, and must remain. Who would destroy them? Let them stand in all their glory. But their real beauty does not consist in their objectionable appendages. The ideal is always true to nature; and this is the secret of their immortality. This ideal belongs to all times, all people, all systems,—because the true and the Divine does so. The progress of Christian art could, consequently, destroy

nothing essentially belonging to ancient art. Even a new æsthetic development on the purest principles of Christianity might, as we conceive, embrace all the excellencies of former times, without at all destroying any intrinsic quality belonging to the past. Our principle is a very simple one ; it is, that all nature belongs to the domain of God,—that all that is true and beautiful belongs to nature,—and that, consequently, all this is admissible in Christian art. But we attach an important alternative to this ; namely, that if this department is not occupied by what is Christian, it will be occupied by that which is unchristian,—just on the principle that art is nothing else than the expression of the tastes and feelings of mankind in visible or oral form.

Contempt of Worldly Vanities.

“ HE that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” These are the words of Christ ; by which we are taught that it is only by a conformity to His life and spirit that we can be truly enlightened, and delivered from all blindness of heart : let it, therefore, be the principal employment of our minds to meditate on the life of Christ.

The doctrine of Christ infinitely transcends the doctrine of the holiest men ; and he that had the spirit of

Christ would find in it "hidden manna," the bread that came down from heaven : but not having His Spirit, many, though they frequently hear His doctrine, yet feel no pleasure in it, no ardent desire after it ; for he only can cordially receive, and truly delight in the doctrine of Christ, who continually endeavors to acquire the spirit and imitate the life of Christ.

Of what benefit are thy most subtle disquisitions into the mystery of the blessed Trinity, if thou art destitute of humility, and therefore a profaner of the Trinity ? It is not profound speculations, but a holy life that proves a man righteous and good. I had rather feel compunction than be able to give the most accurate definition of it. If thy memory could retain the whole Bible and the precepts of all the philosophers, what would it profit thee without charity and the grace of God ? "Vanity of vanities ! and all is vanity," except only the love of God, and an entire devotedness to His service.

It is the highest wisdom, by the contempt of the world, to press forward toward the kingdom of heaven. It is therefore vanity to labor for perishing riches, and place our confidence in their possession : it is vanity to hunt after honors, and raise ourselves to an exalted station : it is vanity to fulfil the lusts of the flesh, and indulge desires that begin and end in torment : it is vanity to wish that life may be long, and to have no concern whether it be good : it is vanity to mind only the pres-

ent world, and not to look forward to that which is to come : to suffer our affections to hover over a state in which all things pass away with the swiftness of thought, and not to raise them to that where true joy abideth forever.

Frequently call to mind the observation of Solomon, that “the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing”; and let it be thy continual endeavor to withdraw thy heart from the love of “the things that are seen,” and to turn it wholly to “the things that are not seen”: for he who lives in subjection to the sensual desires of animal nature defiles his spirit, and loses the grace of God.

Religion and Business.

To combine religion with business, to keep up a spirit of serious piety amid the stir and distraction of a busy and active life,—this is one of the most difficult parts of a Christian’s trial in this world. It is comparatively easy to be religious in the church—to collect our thoughts and compose our feelings, and enter, with an appearance of propriety and decorum, into the offices of religious worship, amidst the quietude of the Sabbath, and within the still and sacred precincts of the house of prayer. But to be religious in the world

—to be pious and holy and earnest-minded in the counting-room, the manufactory, the market-place, the field, the farm—to carry our good and solemn thoughts and feelings into the throng and thoroughfare of daily life,—this is the great difficulty of our Christian calling. No man not lost to all moral influence can help feeling his worldly passions calmed, and some measure of seriousness stealing over his mind, when engaged in the performance of the more awful and serious rites of religion; but the atmosphere of the domestic circle, the exchange, the street, the city's throng, amidst coarse work and cankering cares and toils, is a very different atmosphere from the communion-table. Passing from one to the other has often seemed as the sudden transition from a tropical to a polar climate—from balmy warmth and sunshine to murky mist and freezing cold. And it appears sometimes as difficult to maintain the strength and steadfastness of religious principle and feeling when we go forth from the church to the world, as it would be to preserve an exotic alive in the open air in winter, or to keep the lamp that burns steadily within doors from being blown out if you take it abroad unsheltered from the wind.

Piety is not for Sundays only, but for all days; spirituality of mind is not appropriate to one set of actions, and an impertinence and intrusion with reference to others; but like the act of breathing, like the circulation of the blood, like the silent growth of the

stature, a process that may be going on simultaneously with all our actions—when we are busy, as when we are idlest ; in the church, in the world ; in solitude, in society ; in our grief and in our gladness ; in our toil and in our rest ; sleeping, waking ; by day, by night ; amidst all the engagements and exigencies of life.

Objections to the Supremacy of Religion.

I AM more and more satisfied that the cry against fanaticism and mysticism is neither more nor less than a protest against the entire supremacy of religion in our hearts. To pursue religion as one of the businesses of life will be allowed ; but to cultivate it as the chief and central pleasure of life, is what no Christian Jew understands ; and what, therefore, both his reason and his self-love bind him to reject as inadmissible. At present, things go on with such a tolerably well and wise distribution of their time between worldly business, worldly amusements, and their religious duties, that they can submit to their duty, because they have their amusement along with it. But to insist that religion should be their pleasure, or that nothing should be an amusement to them with which devotion could not mingle itself, is to abolish their present pleasant system.

and rob them at once of comfort for this world and that to come. Here, therefore, is the point about which they will combat while they have the shadow of an argument; and what they cannot effect this way, they will supply by calling names. But I am satisfied to take my portion of their scorn; being as sure as reason and experience can make me, that I am right and that they are wrong. They would own, themselves, that if there were such a thing as a man's chief duty becoming his chief delight, it would be, of all states on earth, the most desirable: but they assume that this cannot be; and they are provoked at any one who would maintain the contrary; because, if such an one be right, what is to become of them? This is a tremendous thought; and, therefore, at all events, to be kept at a distance; and those who would excite it are to be silenced as much as possible.

Aversion to Spiritual Religion.

WHEN will the world cease to refuse "the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely"? You may address them in one way, or in another; yet still there is even in the most orderly, decorous, nay, in many respects, conscientious persons, a kind of heartfelt antipathy to spiritual piety, which neither good nature nor

politeness can wholly repress. They will allow you the merit of sincerity ; they will show respect to your mental talents and acquirements : but under all this there is a deep rooted grudge ; because if they allow you to be right, they own themselves to be wrong, in a matter which they just know enough of to be aware that it is of infinite moment.

PART V.

"THERE is an art which every man should be master of,—the art of reflection. If you are not a thinking man, to what purpose are you a man at all? By reflection you may draw from the fleeting facts of your worldly trade a science permanent as your immortal soul; and make even these subsidiary to the reception of spiritual truth, doing as the dyers do, who, having first dipped their silks in colors of less value, then give them the last tincture of crimson in grain."—COLERIDGE.

"Let not the word heaven be in our mouths only; let it be in our hearts. Let us do the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven; and then we shall make it appear that the kingdom of God is come, that it is come into us.

"Christians then live as such, when their life approaches nearer to the life of angels and blessed saints; when a life of purity and holiness, a life of entire resignation and obedience to the divine will, is their nature and element, their choice and delight."—DR. JOHN WORTHINGTON.

"As sincere Christianity, in whatever degree, may be considered as a certain pledge, so mature Christianity contains in itself a specific earnest of future felicity. In this ripeness of grace there is the actual germ of the glory which is to be revealed; inasmuch as that enjoyment of God, which is the essence of eternal felicity, has so commenced as to satisfy the understanding, and to meet every native craving of the heart: there is, in fact, but one ardent desire, to advance more and more into this inexhaustible fulness."—ALEXANDER KNOX.

PART V.

R e f l e c t i o n .

LIFE is the one universal soul, which, by virtue of the enlivening Breath, and the informing Word, all organized bodies have in common, each after its kind. This, therefore, all animals possess, and man as an animal. But in addition to this, God transfused into man a higher gift, and specially imbreathed ;—even a living (that is, self-subsisting) soul, a soul having its life in itself. *And man became a living soul.* He did not merely possess it, he became it. It was his proper being, his truest self, the man in the man. None then, not one of human kind, so poor and destitute, but there is provided for him, even in his present state, *a house not built with hands* ; ay, and spite of the philosophy (falsely so called) which mistakes the causes, the conditions, and the occasions of our becoming conscious of certain truths and realities for the truths and realities

themselves—a house gloriously furnished. Nothing is wanted but the eye, which is the light of this house, the light which is the eye of this soul. This seeing light, this enlightening eye, is reflection. It is more, indeed, than is ordinarily meant by that word ; but it is what a Christian ought to mean by it, and to know, too, whence it first came, and still continues to come—of what light even this light is but a reflection. This, too, is thought ; and all thought is but unthinking that does not flow out of this, or tend toward it.

An hour of solitude passed in sincere and earnest prayer, or the conflict with, and conquest over a single passion or “subtle bosom sin,” will teach us more of thought, will more effectually awaken the faculty, and form the habit, of reflection, than a year’s study in the Schools without them.

An unreflecting Christian walks in twilight among snares and pitfalls ! He entreats the Heavenly Father not to lead him into temptation, and yet places himself on the very edge of it, because he will not kindle the torch which his Father had given into his hands, as a mean of prevention, and lest he should pray too late.

Interior Learning and Piety.

WHEN internal principle is established, external restraint may be withdrawn. And were prejudice wholly

gone, what copious matter for profound and interesting study would that wonderful concrete of truth and error, of greatness and meanness, of beauty and deformity—the Roman Catholic Church—afford! Viewed from without and indiscriminately, nothing having the Christian name could be more uncouth and revolting. Still under that rubbish must be all the rich results of a providential training of Christ's mystical kingdom for fourteen centuries; that is, from the close of the canon of Scripture until the Reformation. Perhaps some of the grossest errors might, on close examination, be found to point us to valuable, but hitherto neglected truths: and we should possibly, in several instances, discover that there was a providential necessity for questionable practices to continue, until there was a disposition, somewhere, to extract the entire spirit from the unworthy, but, till then, indispensable vehicle.

As an instance of this latter kind, auricular confession is named. Whatever evil consequences may be charged upon this practice, one undeniable good has resulted from it; namely, a more exact and experimental acquaintance with the movements of the human mind, in religious matters, than we see attained by any who have wholly abandoned the system. I say wholly abandoned, because various Protestant churches have resorted to practices not wholly of a different nature. And it cannot be denied that, in every such instance, we find a more marked attention to the inte-

rior effects of religion ; though always with such weak, and not seldom with such dangerous mixtures, as to make it extremely difficult, in the most candid reckoning, to separate the good from the evil. Here, therefore, we are perhaps more aided and instructed by judicious Roman Catholic writers, and those ancient authors to which they introduce us, than by any other means of information. In these, we find the interior piety, at which sectaries aim, not only elucidated and exemplified, but learnedly examined, and judiciously guarded. What, in too many amongst us, becomes fanaticism, in their more excellent writers, employs, and makes alliance with philosophy ; and, at the same time, what ensures sobriety, promotes elevation. The whole mind is provided for and occupied by an adequate extent and depth of principles ; and a solid breadth of foundation admits of a lofty superstructure.

The want of interior learning amongst us has produced lamentable consequences. Those movements of piety, which belong to the mind and heart, have been rather suspected and discountenanced, than explained or cultivated ; until, from its being caricatured by vulgar advocates, inward religion is little less than systematically exploded. It is in this spirit that the champions for high church orthodoxy combat their “ Evangelical ” opponents. They involve in their attack all that is venerable and valuable, with that which is really exceptionable, and justly to be resisted : and in doing so,

they preclude all aid to their cause, either from Divine grace, or from human nature. Both these, as far as in them lies, they resign over to their adversaries; for Divine grace is likeliest to act where its effects are most acknowledged; and human nature will be most attracted where the fullest provision is made for exercising its affections.

Were these men acquainted with the chain of traditional truth, which Divine Providence kept unbroken through the darkest ages, they would discover in the prayers which they continually read or hear the well-digested substance of that they combat and vilify. They would find, to their confusion, that Gregory, the chief author of those prayers, was, what they, in their ignorance, would call a Methodist: that is, one who prized, and cultivated, and dwelt upon, in all his discourses and writings, those interior effects of Divine grace, which designate their nature to the happy possessor by a strength which no mere human effort could possess, and by a purity of which God only could be the Author.

Purity of Intention.

THAT we should intend and design God's glory in every action we do, whether it be natural or chosen, is

expressed by St. Paul, "Whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God." Which rule when we observe, every action of nature becomes religious, and every meal is an act of worship, and shall have its reward in its proportion, as well as an act of prayer. Blessed be that goodness and grace of God, which, out of infinite desire to glorify and save mankind, would make the very works of nature capable of becoming acts of virtue, that all our lifetime we may do Him service.

This grace is so excellent that it sanctifies the most common actions of life ; and yet so necessary that without it the very best actions of our devotion are imperfect and vicious. For he that prays out of custom, or gives alms for praise, or fasts to be accounted religious, is but a Pharisee in his devotions, and a beggar in his alms, and a hypocrite in his fast. But a holy end sanctifies all these and all other actions which can be made holy, and gives distinction to them, and procures acceptance.

For as to know the end distinguishes a man from a beast, so to choose a good end distinguishes him from an evil man. Hezekiah repeated his good deeds upon his sick-bed, and obtained favor of God, but the Pharisee was accounted insolent for doing the same thing : because this man did it to upbraid his brother, the other to obtain mercy of God. Zacharias questioned with the angel about his message, and was made

speechless for his incredulity ; but the blessed Virgin Mary questioned too, and was blameless ; for she did it to inquire after the manner of the thing, but he did not believe the thing itself : he doubted of God's power, or the truth of the messenger ; but she, only of her own incapacity. This was it which distinguished the mourning of David from the exclamation of Saul ; the confession of Pharaoh from that of Manasses ; the tears of Peter from the repentance of Judas : for the praise is not in the deed done, but in the manner of its doing. If a man visits his sick friend, and watches at his pillow for charity's sake, and because of his old affection, we approve it ; but if he does it in hope of legacy, he is a vulture. The same things are honest and dishonest : the manner of doing them, and the end of the design, make the separation.

Holy intention is to the actions of a man that which the soul is to the body, or form to its matter, or the root to the tree, or the sun to the world, or the fountain to a river, or the base to a pillar : for without these the body is a dead trunk, the matter is sluggish, the tree is a block, the world is darkness, the river is quickly dry, the pillar rushes into flatness and a ruin ; and the action is sinful, or unprofitable and vain. The poor farmer who gave a dish of cold water to Artaxerxes was rewarded with a golden goblet ; and he that gives the same to a disciple in the name of a disciple, shall have a crown : but if he gives water in despite, when

the disciple needs wine or a cordial, his reward shall be to want that water to cool his tongue.

Contemplation.

I.

MEN must know, that in this theatre of man's life, it is reserved only for God and angels to be lookers on: neither could the question ever have been received in the church but upon this defence, that the monastic life is not simply contemplative, but performeth the duty either of incessant prayers and supplications, which hath been truly esteemed as an office in the church; or else of writing, or taking instructions for writing concerning the law of God, as Moses did when he abode so long in the mount. So we see Enoch, the seventh from Adam, who was the first contemplative and walked with God, yet did also endow the church with prophecy, which St. Jude citeth. But for contemplation which should be finished in itself, without casting beams upon society, assuredly divinity knoweth it not.

II.

The philosopher thought the contemplative life the most happy one, but thought it too great a blessing for mortal man, too high for this frail nature, and above the state and condition of this world: he had some reason on his side; yet we should press on toward perfection. Rejecting the romance and enthusiasm in which the monastic life is described (by Roman Catholic writers) as equalling almost the angelic, nevertheless it cannot be denied but that the prophets, the Nazarenes, and the Essenes amongst the Jews, as well as many devout and excellent Christians in all ages of the Church, have sought retirement from the world as a means to attain a higher degree of holiness, to mortify all sinful propensities and desires, to correct and subdue what he feels amiss in himself; to perfect and augment his graces, and to dress and adorn his soul for the festival solemnities and triumph of another world: here his aspirations are to advance into the borders and confines of heaven, by faith and devotion; and from the heights of meditation, to survey, as from the next advantageous hill, the riches and pleasures of that Canaan which he shall in a moment enter into: enlarging his appetite and capacity of happiness so he enlarges his share in it: by this method he shall adorn religion, and represent it to the world as most lovely and useful; he shall ex

periment it to be unspeakably delightful in itself; he shall render the world more easy to him, and heaven more desirable; and when he comes to the banks of Jordan, that is, of death, which parts this world from the other, he shall find the streams of it divided to make him way, and he shall pass through it full of humble gratitude for the blessings of this past life, and ravishing hopes of those of the future.

They who are unable to start proper matter for contemplation, or to carry it on regularly and coherently, can reap little fruit by this kind of exercise: to such these defects may be supplied by reading, and the reflections and applications of it as are most easily and obviously made. For example (Matt. v.): "And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying." O blessed Jesus! Thou, the true doctor and teacher, whose words are life and light, spirit and truth, I leave the multitude, I quit the world, and in the quality of a disciple approach near thee; O do thou open thy mouth, and speak to me! I desire not to hear the voice of the world, or of the flesh, or of the devil; speak thou only to me, speak thou to my heart, and to my conscience, and let me hear and feel that voice that spoke purity to the leprous, and life to the dead. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The kingdom of heaven, this is a blessedness indeed!

The kingdoms of the earth dazzle and astonish me ; my fancy cannot comprehend, my ambition cannot aspire after their grandeur and glory. Ah ! what then must the kingdom of heaven be ! But, O my Lord, am I of the number of these poor ! if I be not, make me so ; let me be ever contemptible to the world, so I be approved and acceptable to thee ; let me have no ambitious thoughts but for thy favor, and for the crown of righteousness ; let me covet no riches, no honor, no power here ; if thy kingdom be but mine in reversion, it is abundantly enough ! Thus, without rhapsody or excitement, persons of the lowest talents, if they have any tincture of religion in them, may be easily supplied with variety of argument, and with most passionate and piercing thoughts.

O blessed, O voluptuous life ! wherein, sequestered from the world, I enjoy all that it has in it of pure, of true, or natural good. Ah ! that I could once break loose from those troubles and obligations that hang upon me, and enter into thy peace and tranquillity ! I would plunge myself into all thy rational delights ; I would lose myself to this contemptible world ; and, forgetting those shadows and appearances, and, at best, but faint and weak reflections of good, which flutter here about me, I would abandon myself entirely to the joys of the Spirit, and the elevations of contemplation. Let others enjoy honor, and wealth, and power ; let me enjoy truth and God. Let others enjoy the flatteries of sense,

and the cheats of fancy ; give me the health of a sprightly mind, the calm and serenity of a silent retreat, with the pleasure and security which the Divine presence breeds in it.

Meditation.

I.

MEDITATION is the life of virtue, as virtue is the life of the soul. It is the conduit by which a happy and delightful communication is maintained between God and the soul ; through which the graces and blessings of God descend to the soul, and through which the ardor, the praises, and adoration of the soul ascend to God. It is the exercise of the soul, which makes it, and preserves it, vigorous and healthful ; without which, it would soon become heavy and languid, void of pleasure, and weary of its own being ; and this uneasiness would oblige it to seek its satisfaction in vain and trifling entertainments, and debase it, at last, even to folly and vice.

II.

We must often survey the grounds and foundations of our faith ; we must consider frequently and seriously

the Scripture topics of hope and fear: such are the death of Jesus, a judgment to come, the holiness and justice and the omnipresence of God. We must diligently observe the wiles and stratagems of Satan, the arts and insinuations of the world and flesh, and mark the progress of sin from its very beginning to maturity; and all this with a particular regard to the corruption of our own nature, and the deceitfulness of our own hearts. We must often ponder on the beauty and peace of holiness, the love of God and of Jesus, the virtues, sufferings, and crowns of martyrs. And if we will increase in strength, we must practise this duty of meditation often, and we must not suffer ourselves to be withdrawn from it, or be prevailed with to intermit it on any slight and trivial pretences. And because we are not always masters of our own affairs, nor consequently of our time, therefore ought we to have ready at hand a good collection of texts, which contain in few words the power and spirit of gospel motives, the perfection and beauty of duties, and the substance of advice and counsel: and to fix these so in our memory that they may serve as a shield for us to oppose, as our Saviour did, against the darts of the devil, and as a supply of excellent and useful thoughts upon a sudden: so that in all the little interruptions of business, and the many little vacancies of the day, the mind, which is an active and busy spirit, may never want a proper subject to work upon; much less lose itself in wild

and lazy amusements, or defile itself by vain or vicious thought.

It is our great unhappiness, that the soul is always in the senses, and the senses are always upon the world; we converse with the world, we talk of the world, we think of the world, we project for the world; and what can this produce, but a carnal and worldly frame of spirit? We must meditate heavenly things: we must have our conversation in heaven; we must accustom ourselves to inward and heavenly pleasures, if we will have heavenly minds; we must let no day pass, wherein we must not withdraw ourselves from the body, and sequester ourselves from the world, that we may converse with God and our own souls. This will soon enable us to disdain the low and beggarly satisfactions of the outward man, and make us long to be set free from the weight of this corruptible body, to breathe in purer air, and take our fill of refined and spiritual pleasure.

III.

Appropriate a convenient part of time to retirement and self-converse, and frequently meditate on the wonderful love of God in the redemption of man. Reject all studies that are merely curious; and read what will penetrate the heart with holy compunction, rather than exercise the brain with useless speculations.

If thou canst refrain from unnecessary conversation and idle visits, and suppress the desire of "hearing and telling some new thing," thou wilt find not only abundant leisure, but convenient opportunity, for holy and useful meditation. It is the declaration of Seneca, that "as often as he mingled in the company of men, he came out of it less a man than he went in." To the truth of this our own experience, after much free conversation, bears testimony; for it is much easier to be wholly silent than to exceed in word; it is much easier to keep concealed at home, than to preserve ourselves from sin abroad: he, therefore, that presseth forward to the perfection of the internal and spiritual life, must, with Jesus, as much as possible, "withdraw himself from the multitude."

No man can safely go abroad, that does not love to stay at home; no man can safely speak, that does not willingly hold his tongue; no man can safely govern, that would not cheerfully become subject; no man can safely command, that has not truly learned to obey; and no man can safely rejoice, but he that has the testimony of a good conscience.

The joy of the saints has always been full of the fear of God; nor were they less humble, and less watchful over themselves, because of the splendor of their holiness, and their extraordinary measures of grace. But the security of the wicked begins in pride and presumption, and ends in self-delusion. What-

ever, therefore, are thy attainments in holiness, do not promise thyself a state of unchangeable elevation in the present life. Those whose character for virtue has stood high in the esteem of men, have been proportionably more exposed to the danger of a severer fall through self-confidence. Therefore, it is much safer for most men not to be wholly free from temptation, but rather to be often assaulted, lest they grow secure, lest they exalt themselves in the pride of human attainments, nay, lest they become wholly devoted to the honors, pleasures, and comforts of their earthly life.

O that man would less anxiously seek after transitory joy, would less busy himself with the trifling affairs of a perishing world : how pure a conscience might he maintain ! O that he could divorce his spirit from all vain solicitude, and, devoting it to the contemplation of God and the truths of salvation, place all his confidence in the divine mercy. In what profound tranquillity and peace would he possess his soul !

No man is worthy of heavenly consolation, unless he hath been diligently exercised in holy compunction. If thou desirest true compunction, enter into thy closet, and, excluding the tumults of the world, according to the advice of the Psalmist, “ commune with thy heart and be still,” that thou mayest feel regret and horror for sin. Thou wilt find in the closet that which thou often lovest abroad. The closet, long continued in, becomes delightful ; but when seldom visited, it is beheld

with reluctance, weariness, and disgust. If, in the beginning of thy conversion, thou canst keep close to it, and cultivate the advantages it is capable of yielding, it will be ever after desirable as a beloved friend, and become the seat of true consolation.

In solitude and silence the holy soul advances with speedy steps, and learns the hidden truths of the oracles of God. Then she riseth with a more intimate union with her Creator, in proportion as she leaves the darkness, impurity, and tumult of the world. To him who withdraws himself from his friends and acquaintances to seek after God, will God draw near with his holy angels. It is better for a man to lie hid, and attend to the purification of his soul, than, neglecting that "one thing needful," to go abroad and work miracles. Our sensual appetites continually prompt us to range abroad in search of gratification ; but when the hour of wandering is over, what do we bring home but remorse of conscience, and weariness and dissipation of spirit ? A joyful going out is often succeeded by a sad return ; and a merry evening brings a sorrowful morning. Thus carnal joy enters delightfully, but ere it departs bites and kills.

What canst thou see anywhere else which thou canst not see in thy chosen retirement ? Behold the heavens, the earth, and all the elements ! for out of these were all things made. What canst thou see there or anywhere that will "continue long under the sun" ? Thou hopest,

perhaps, to subdue desire by enjoyment ; but thou wilt find it impossible for “the eye to be satisfied with seeing, or the ear filled with hearing.” If all nature could pass in review before thee, what would it be but a vain vision ?

Lift up thy eyes, then, to God in the highest heavens, and pray for the forgiveness of thy innumerable sins and negligences. Leave vain pleasures to the enjoyment of vain men, and mind only that which God hath required of thee for thine own eternal good. Make thy door fast behind thee ; and invite Jesus, thy Beloved, to come unto thee, and enlighten thy darkness with His light. Abide faithfully with Him in this retirement, for thou canst not find so much peace in any other place.

Compunction of Heart.

IF thou wouldst make any progress in the Christian life, keep thyself continually in the fear of God. Love not licentious freedom, but restrain all thy senses within strict discipline, and guard thy spirit against imtemperate mirth. Give up thy heart to compunction, and thou wilt soon feel enkindled in the fire of devotion. Compunction opens a path to infinite good, which is instantly lost by dissipation and merriment. It is won-

derful that any man should rejoice in this life who considers his state of banishment, and the multitude of dangers to which he is continually exposed ; but through levity of heart, and the neglect of self-examination, we grow insensible of the disorders of our souls, and often vainly laugh, when in reason we ought to mourn. There is, however, no true liberty, nor any solid joy, but in the fear of God united with a pure conscience.

Blessed is the man who can throw off every impediment of trouble and dissipation, and recollect his spirit into union with holy compunction ! Blessed is he that can renounce every enjoyment that may defile or burden his conscience. Strive manfully ; one custom is subdued and extirpated by another. If thou canst divorce thyself from men and their concerns, they will soon divorce themselves from thee, and leave thee to do the work of thy own salvation in peace.

Perplex not thy spirit, therefore, with the business of others, nor involve thyself in the interests of the great. Keep thy eye continually upon thyself as its chief object. Grieve not that thou dost not enjoy the favor of men, but rather grieve that thou hast not walked with that holy vigilance and self-denial which becomes a true Christian and a devoted servant of God.

If we did more frequently think of the time of death than of the length of life, we could undoubtedly exert more ardent resolution in resisting the power of sin : but because we suffer not these considerations to im-

press our hearts, but turn them off by yielding to the blandishments of sense, we remain, both to the evil of our fallen state and the means of redemption from it, cold and insensible.

Advantage of a Devotional Spirit.

A SPIRIT of devotion is one of the greatest blessings ; and, by consequence, the want of it one of the greatest misfortunes, which a Christian can experience. When it is present, it gives life to every act of worship which we perform ; it makes every such act interesting and comfortable to ourselves. It is felt in our most retired moments, in our beds, our closets, our rides, our walks. It is stirred within us when we are assembled with our children and servants in family prayer. It leads us to church, to the congregation of our fellow Christians there collected ; it accompanies us in our joint offices of religion in an especial manner ; and it returns us to our homes holier, and happier, and better ; and lastly, what greatly enhances its value to every anxious Christian, it affords to himself a proof that his heart is right toward God : when it is followed up by a good life, by abstinence from sin, and endeavors after virtue, by avoiding evil and doing good, the proof and the satisfaction to be drawn from it are complete.

Mental Devotion.

It is to be remarked, that a fulness of mental devotion was the spring and source of our Lord's visible piety. And this state of mind we must acquire. It consists in this ; in a habit of turning our thoughts toward God, whenever they are not taken up with some particular engagement. Every man has some subject or other to which his thoughts turn, when they are not particularly occupied. In a good Christian this subject is God, or what appertains to him. A good Christian, walking in his fields, sitting in his chamber, lying upon his bed, is thinking of God. His meditations draw of their own accord to that object, and then his thoughts kindle up his devotions ; and devotion never burns so bright, or so warm, as when it is lighted up from within. The immensity, the stupendous nature of the adorable Being who made, and who supports everything about us ; his grace, his love, his condescension, toward his reasonable and moral creatures, that is, toward men ; the good things which he has placed within our reach, the heavenly happiness which he has put it in our power to obtain ; the infinite moment of our acting well and right, so as not to miss of the great reward, and not only to miss of our reward, but to sink into perdition ; such reflections will not fail of generating devotion, of moving within us either prayer or thanksgiving,

or both. This is mental devotion. Perhaps the difference between a religious and irreligious character depends more upon this mental devotion than upon any other thing. The difference will show itself in men's lives and conversation, in their dealings with mankind, and in the various duties and offices of their station : but it originates and proceeds from a difference in their internal habits of mind, with respect to God ; in the habit of thinking of him in private, and of what relates to him ; in cultivating these thoughts or neglecting them ; inviting them or driving them from us ; in forming, or in having formed, a habit and custom, as to this point, unobserved and unobservable by others (because it passes in the mind, which no one can see), but of the most decisive consequence to our spiritual character and immortal interests. This mind was in Christ : a deep, fixed, and constant piety. The expressions of it we have seen in all the forms which could bespeak earnestness and sincerity ; but the principle itself lay deep in his divine soul ; the expressions likewise were occasional, more or fewer, as occasions called, or opportunities offered, but the principle fixed and constant, uninterrupted, unremitted.

Interiority.

I.

It is the advice of the wise man, "Dwell at home," or with yourself; and though there are very few that do this, yet it is surprising that the greatest part of mankind cannot be prevailed upon, at least to visit themselves sometimes; but according to the saying of the wise Solomon, "The eyes of the fool are in the ends of the earth."

It is a matter of great difficulty, and requires no ordinary skill and address, to fix the attention of men on the world within them, to induce them to study the processes and superintend the works which they are themselves carrying on in their own minds; in short, to awaken in them both the faculty of thought and the inclination to exercise it. For, alas! the largest part of mankind are nowhere greater strangers than at home.

II.

Interiority is one of the very safest and happiest habits which a human being can possess. It seems to me that it is peculiarly a disposition which our adorable Redeemer was solicitous to infuse into all His faithful disciples. It appears to have been, in a remarkable

degree, his own habitual feeling, and, as it were, his natural temper. And, even naturally, to resemble him in anything, is surely one of the most valuable distinctions which can fall to the lot of human nature, and must be among the most apt predispositions to genuine felicity both here and hereafter.

When we experimentally learn, in however low a degree, the resource which is found in the converse of the heart with God, and the independence which may thus be obtained, on sublunary things and circumstances, it is surely a comfort of a kind infinitely above every other in this lower world.

The Inner Life.

“The kingdom of God is within you,” saith our blessed Redeemer. Abandon, therefore, the cares and pleasures of this wretched world, and turn to the Lord with all thy heart, and thy soul shall find rest. If thou withdrawest thy attention from outward things, and keepest it fixed on what passeth within thee, thou wilt soon perceive the “coming of the kingdom of God”; for “the kingdom of God is that peace and joy in the Holy Ghost,” which cannot be received by sensual and worldly men. All the glory and beauty of Christ are mani-

fested within, and there he delights to dwell ; his visits there are frequent, his condescension amazing, his conversation sweet, his comforts refreshing, and the peace that he brings passeth all understanding.

O faithful soul, dispose thy heart for the reception of the Bridegroom, who will not fail to fulfil the promise which he hath made to thee in these words : “ If a man love me he will keep my words : and my Father will love him ; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” Give, therefore, free admission to Christ, and exclude all others as intruders. When thou possessest Christ thou art rich, and canst want no other treasure. He will protect thee so powerfully, and provide for thee so liberally, that thou wilt no more have need to depend on the caprice of men. Men are changeable and evanescent as the “ morning cloud ” : but Christ abideth eternally, and in him the fountain of strength and peace will flow forever.

Thou must not place any confidence in frail and mortal men, however endeared by reciprocal affection or offices of kindness : nor art thou to be grieved when, from some change in their temper, they become unfriendly and injurious ; for men are inconstant as the wind, and he that is for thee to-day may to-morrow be against thee. But place thy whole confidence in God, and let him be all thy fear, and all thy love : He will answer for thee against the great accuser, and do that which is most conducive to thy deliverance from evil.

Here thou hast "no continuing city"; and whatever be thy situation, thou art "a stranger and a pilgrim," and canst never obtain rest till thou art united to Christ. Why, then, dost thou stand gazing about the earth, when the earth is not the seat of thy repose? Thy proper dwelling place is heaven; and earthly objects are only to be transiently viewed as thou travellest to it; they are all hurried away in the resistless current of time, and thy earthly life with them; beware therefore of adhering to them, lest thou be bound in their chains, and perish in their ruin. Let thy thoughts dwell with the Most High, and thy desire and prayer ascend without intermission to Christ.

That man is truly wise, and taught not of men, but of God, who perceiveth and judgeth of things as they are in themselves, and not as they are distinguished by names and general estimation. He that has known the power of the spiritual life, and withdrawn his attention from the perishing interests of the world, is not dependent on time or place for the exercise of devotion. He can soon recollect himself, because he is never wholly engaged by sensible objects. His tranquillity is not interrupted by bodily labor or inevitable business, but with calmness he accommodates himself to events as they take place. He is not moved by the capricious humors and perverse behavior of men; and constant experience has convinced him that the soul is no further obstructed and disturbed in its progress toward perfec-

tion, than as it is under the power and influence of the present life.

If the frame of thy spirit was in right order, and thou wert inwardly pure, all outward things would conduce to thy improvement in holiness, and work together for thy everlasting good : and because thou art disgusted by a thousand objects, and disturbed by a thousand events, it is evident thou art not yet “crucified to the world, nor the world to thee.” Nothing entangles and defiles the heart so much as the inordinate love of creatures. If thou canst abandon the hope of consolation in the enjoyments of earthly and sensual life, thou wilt soon be able to contemplate the glory and blessedness of the heavenly state ; and wilt frequently partake of that spiritual consolation, which the world can neither give nor take away.

The Kingdom of God.

God is especially in the hearts of his people by his Holy Spirit : and indeed the hearts of holy men are temples in the truth of things, and, in type and shadow, they are heaven itself. For God reigns in the hearts of his servants : there is his kingdom. The power of

grace hath subdued all his enemies : there is his power. They serve Him night and day, and give him thanks and praise : that is his glory. This is the religion and worship of God in the temple. The temple itself is the heart of man ; Christ is the High Priest, who from thence sends up the incense of prayers, and joins them to his own intercession, and presents all together to his Father ; and the Holy Ghost, by his dwelling there, hath also consecrated it into a temple ; and God dwells in our hearts by faith, and Christ by his Spirit, and the Spirit by his purities ; so that we are also cabinets of the mysterious Trinity ; and what is this short of heaven itself, but as infancy is short of manhood, and letters of words ? The same state of life it is, but not the same age. It is heaven in a looking-glass, dark, but yet true, representing the beauties of the soul, and the graces of God, and the images of his eternal glory, by the reality of a special presence.

Converse with God.

IN your retirement make frequent colloquies, or short discoursings, between God and thy own soul. “ Seven times a day do I praise thee : and in the night season also I thought upon thee, while I was waking.” So did David ; and every act of complaint or thanksgiving,

every act of rejoicing or of mourning, every petition and every return of the heart in these intercourses, is a going to God, an appearing in his presence, and a representing him present to thy spirit and to thy necessity. And this was long since by a spiritual person called “a building to God a chapel in our heart.” It reconciles Martha’s employment with Mary’s devotion, charity and religion, the necessities of our calling and the employments of devotion. For thus in the midst of the works of your trade, you may retire into your chapel, your heart; and converse with God by frequent addresses and returns.

Represent and offer to God “acts of love and fear,” which are the proper effects of this apprehension, and the proper exercise of this consideration. For as God is everywhere present by his power, he calls for reverence and godly fear: as he is present to thee in all thy needs, and relieves them, he deserves thy love: and since, in every accident of our lives, we find one or other of these apparent, and in most things we see both, it is a proper and proportionate return, that, to every such demonstration of God, we express ourselves sensible of it, by admiring the Divine goodness, or trembling at his presence; ever obeying him because we love him, and ever obeying him because we fear to offend him. This is that which Enoch did, who thus “walked with God.”

Let us remember that God is in us, and that we are

in him : we are his workmanship, let us not deface it ; we are in his presence, let us not pollute it by unholy and impure actions. God hath “ also wrought all our works in us ” : and because he rejoices in his own works, if we defile them, and make them unpleasant to him, we walk perversely with God, and he will walk crookedly toward us.

He walks as in the presence of God that converses with him in frequent prayer and frequent communion ; that runs to him in all his necessities ; that asks counsel of him in all his doubtings ; that opens all his wants to him ; that weeps before him for his sins ; that asks remedy and support for his weakness ; that fears him as a judge ; reverences him as a lord ; obeys him as a father ; and loves him as a patron.

Christianity Implies Religious Experience.

CHRISTIANITY implies a fixed principle, a blessed familiarity with the only true God, and Him whom He hath sent. It implies an actual experience of such influences and attractions as wordly minds have no idea of, and which spiritual minds know to be of a nature distinct from everything they could do for themselves. And, though they are not often disappointed in their cordial endeavors to obtain some degree at least of

these divine drawings, yet still they fail sufficiently to assure them that there are laws in the case which operate independently of the mere will of man ; and that, in the strictest sense, they are not sufficient of themselves even to think as of themselves ; but that their sufficiency is of God.

It must strike us, that where these things are not apprehended, there is some want of tenderness of conscience. There may be the nicest sense of what we owe to our fellow men ; and yet there may not be a due impression of that profound saying, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” There is a spiritual discernment of God, which shows depths of subtle evil, not before discovered ; and which would not be attended to, nor regarded as evil at all, if we did not feel a certain intercourse with God to be essential to our happiness ; with which intercourse those evils are felt to be incompatible. When these deep and subtle evils, then, are detected, our own inability to expel or overcome them will be also manifest. This will lead to earnest prayer for deliverance from them ; which deliverance, again, we naturally look for through a deeper and more influential sense of divine things. And, being deeply interested, and closely attentive, when such a sense grows, and in proportion as it grows in us, we mark the difference, and feel, with delightful satisfaction, that what we cannot do for ourselves, God does for us ; and that imploring his aid is not a fruitless re-

source. Thus tribulation, of a spiritual as well as temporal kind, "worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope."

Self-Resignation.

SELF-RESIGNATION is the way to true rest—an holy rest; to the Sabbath of the soul, as St. Augustine calls it. If thou wilt enjoy the true rest, and keep the inward Sabbath, thou must not do thine own ways, nor speak thine own words, nor find thine own pleasure (to borrow those words in Isaiah lviii.): thou must cease from thine own works, as the phrase is, Heb. iv. 10.

As the soul groweth in resignation it returns more to its rest; it comes to be more as it would be by being more restored toward its original constitution, its first state. The resigned soul enjoys religion in all the sweetness and privileges thereof; it is prepared to taste and see how good the Lord is. To him that overcometh (that overcometh his own will, those lusts that war against soul) shall be given the hidden manna; and the white stone, with a new name written in it; known by him only that receiveth it; and a stranger intermeddleth not with his joy. Such a one hath meat to eat which the world knows not of, and is fed with the food of angels.

There is, indeed, pain in the first tearing off our wills from those things they cleaved and stuck fast to. As it is said of the milch kine that drew the ark, their calves being shut up, they went lowing all the way that they went to Bethshemesh. So it is with souls in their passage to resignation,—they then parting with what was dear to them, fondly beloved, and eagerly pursued by them ; with that, in fact, which was their life and nature. But they are no sooner arrived at this state but the bitterness of death is past—the bitterness of the death of the old corrupt man ; the hour of travail is over, and they remember no more the anguish, for joy that the new man, created after the image of God, is born within them. They have broken through the difficulties of the way, are got out of the wilderness, over Jordan, and their feet are on the Holy Land—the land of righteousness and peace. Henceforth the ways of religion are not (as before) grievous, but paths of peace, and ways of pleasantness ; flowery and sweet, rosy and soft ways. Religion is now become their temper, constitution, and life ; and sin is grievous, strange, and hard to them. 'Tis not so troublesome to them to be patient, as to be passionate ; to forgive, as to revenge. Humility is more easy to them than pride ; chastity and purity are more sweet than lust and sensuality. The inward voice of such a soul is, “ I delight to do thy will, O my God ! ”

There is no such liberty as to be free to good, and

enlarged to spiritual obedience. He that is so hath an empire within him ; he is in his own power ; he hath victory over the world—both the good and evil things of it ; his mind is unhampered, disentangled, and set loose ; and it is lord over those whom before it obeyed. And what a glorious conquest is this ! “ There is no victory more glorious,” says St. Cyprian, “ than that whereby we become conquerors over inordinate affections.”

Simplicity and Purity.

SIMPLICITY and purity are the two wings with which man soars above earth and all temporary nature. Simplicity is in the intention : purity is in the affection : simplicity turns to God, purity enjoys him.

No good action will be difficult and painful, if thou art free from inordinate affection : and this internal freedom thou wilt enjoy, when it is the one simple intention of thy mind to obey the will of God, and to do good to thy fellow creatures.

If thy heart was rightly disposed, every creature would be a book of divine knowledge : a mirror of life, in which thou mightest contemplate the eternal power and beneficence of the Author of Life ; for there is no creature, however small and abject, that is not a monument of the goodness of God. Such as is the frame of the

spirit, such is its judgment of outward things. If thou hadst simplicity and purity, thou wouldst be able to comprehend things without error, and behold them without danger : the pure heart safely surveys not only heaven, but hell.

If there be joy in this world, who possesses it more than the pure in heart ? And if there be tribulation and anguish, who suffers them more than the wounded spirit ?

As iron cast into the fire is purified from its rust, and becomes bright as the fire itself ; so the soul that in simplicity and purity adheres to God, is delivered from the corruption of animal nature, and changed into the “ new man ” ; formed after the image of Him that created him.

Those who suffer the desire of perfection to grow cold and languid, are terrified at the most inconsiderable difficulties, and soon driven back to seek consolation in the enjoyments of sensual life. But those in whom that desire is kept alive and invigorated by continual self-denial, and a steady perseverance in that narrow path in which Christ has called us to follow him, find every step they take more and more easy, and feel these labors light that were once thought insurmountable.

Predestination Conditional.

It is certain, by the testimony of the Apostle, that all who are predestinated must be made conformable to the image of the Son of God. It is, therefore, equally certain, that it must be the chief care and principal endeavor of one who earnestly desires to be reckoned amongst the number of those, to keep the eye of his soul closely fixed on the most holy original, Christ; to draw in himself as resembling and perfect a copy of it as possibly can be done, by Divine grace. We have, then, thus far, foreseen the conditions that have embellished and graced all the works of Christ; and we must do what in us lies, to adorn our own with the like qualities. Christ was the noblest of all agents; and the most perfect nobility of the soul proceeds from his virtue and holiness. Let, therefore, the inward purity and candor of our conscience be the fundamental condition of our acting and working.—“And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offerings; but unto Cain, and his offering, he had not respect.” Respect, from God, is his approbation and love; but he never approves or loves the gifts, unless he has first, in his mercy, accepted the giver. Abel and his oblations were accepted by God; and the cause of his being so came from his innocence; and because he was upright.

We should not have so great a regard to what we *do*, as to what we truly *are*. For, were we good in the inward man, our actions would be likewise good; and if we were righteous at the bottom, our actions would be so too. Many place holiness in good works; but never so much as dream that it consists in being possessed of a principle of sanctity. Let our works appear never so holy, yet they do not sanctify us, so far as they are works: but, in proportion as we are godly, and as they spring from the centre of a holy soul. It is a holy heart which sanctifies everything we set about; and that man is holiest whose soul is best replenished with the grace and love of God; and his works are still the better qualified, the greater respect he has to the glory of God. Our diligent endeavor, therefore, should be to keep this secret ground and centre of our soul undefiled and enlarged; seeing, without all question, man's essential happiness is rooted and placed in it. It is the mind that is good and well experienced in the pure love of God, which makes our actions perfect and accepted in the sight of the Divine Majesty. What may be drawn from this heavenly doctrine is this, that, seeing the true godliness of human actions does not consist in the natural or material goodness of them only, but in that which is supernatural also, proceeding from sanctifying grace, and from love; then human actions shall be proportionably good, by how much the more fervent love and abundant grace they are advanced to the glory of

God. Hence it comes to pass, that very oft a poor, godly woman, who receives the sacrament with earnestness of love to God, deserves more than the priest who consecrates it: and a poor, provided he be a devout man, has a greater interest in reward than many great and learned doctors, who shine by their preaching and ingenious performances like so many suns in the Church of God: and that, because the greater measure of love makes the action that is meanest of itself become the holier of the two; and, therefore, the sanctity of the agent is the root and foundation of holy actions.

Election, Calling and Salvation.

Two links of the chain (namely, election and salvation) are up in heaven in God's own hand; but this middle one (effectual calling) is let down to earth, into the hearts of his children, and they laying hold on it, have sure hold on the other two: for no power can sever them. If, therefore, they can read the characters of God's image in their own souls, those are the counterpart of the golden characters of his love, in which their names are written in the book of life. Their believing writes their names under the promises of the revealed book of life, and thus ascertains them that the

same names are in the secret book of life which God hath by himself from eternity. So that finding the stream of grace in their hearts, though they see not the fountain whence it flows, nor the ocean into which it returns, yet they know that it hath its source in their eternal election, and shall empty itself into the ocean of their eternal salvation.

If Election, Calling, and Salvation be inseparably linked together, then, by any one of them a man may lay hold on all the rest, and may know that his hold is sure ; and this is the way wherein we may attain, and ought to seek, the comfortable assurance of the love of God. Therefore make your calling sure, and by that your election ; for that being done, this follows of itself. We are not to pry immediately into the decree, but to read it in the performance. Though the mariner sees not the pole-star, yet the needle of the compass which points to it tells him which way he sails : thus the heart that is touched with the loadstone of divine love, trembling with godly fear, and yet still looking toward God by fixed believing, interprets the fear by the love in the fear, and tells the soul that its course is heavenward toward the haven of eternal rest. He that loves, may be sure he was loved first ; and he that chooses God for his delight and portion, may conclude confidently that God hath chosen him to be one of those that shall enjoy him, and be happy in him forever : for that our love and electing of him are but the

return and repercussion of the beams of his love shining upon us.

Although, from present unsanctification a man cannot infer that he is not elected ; for the decree may, for the part of a man's life, run (as it were) underground ; yet this is sure, that that estate leads to death, and unless it be broken, will prove the black line of reprobation. A man hath no portion amongst the children of God, nor can read one word of comfort in all the promises that belong to them, while he remains unholy.

Eternal Happiness.

I.

HAVE we, if our religion is real, no anticipation of happiness in the glorious future ? Is there no "rest that remaineth for the people of God," no home and loving hearts awaiting us when the toils of our hurried day of life are ended ? What is earthly rest or relaxation, what the release from toil after which we so often sigh, but the faint shadow of the saint's everlasting rest, the rest of the soul in God ? What visions of earthly bliss can ever, if our Christian faith be not a form, compare with "the glory soon to be revealed" ? What glory of earthly reunion with the rapture of that

hour when the heavens shall yield an absent Lord to our embrace, to be parted from us no more forever! And if all this be most sober truth, what is there to except this joyful hope from that law to which, in all other deep joys, our minds are subject? Why may we not, in this case too, think often, amidst our worldly work, of the House to which we are going, of the true and loving hearts that beat for us, and of the sweet and joyous welcome that awaits us there? And even when we make them not, of set purpose, the subject of our thoughts, is there not enough of grandeur in the objects of a believer's hope to pervade his spirit at all times with a calm and reverential joy? Do not think all this strange, fanatical, impossible. If it do seem so, it can only be because your heart is in the earthly, but not in the higher and holier hopes. No! the strange thing is, not that amidst the world's work we should be able to think of our House, but that we should ever be able to forget it; and the stranger, sadder still, that while the little day of life is passing—morning, noontide, evening—each stage more rapid than the last; while to many the shadows are already fast lengthening, and the declining sun warns them that “the night is at hand, wherein no man can work,” there should be those whose whole thoughts are absorbed in the business of the world, and to whom the reflection never occurs, that soon they must go out into eternity, without a friend, without a home!

II.

Assurance of eternal happiness, that sublimest degree, that finishing stroke, of human felicity in this life, is that which every soul pants after, which makes any serious reflections in matters of religion. It is therefore necessary to know upon what foundation this blessed state is built, and from what principle it arises. And those, I think, it is plainly evident, are faith, love, and obedience : since no man can have assurance, that does not feel in himself the principle of obedience ; nor can he have obedience, without the principle of love ; nor love, without the principle of faith. For it is a notorious contradiction to imagine that any one can be assured of God Almighty's pardon without obeying Him ; of his favor, without loving Him ; or of the eternal enjoyment of his goodness, without a firm and steadfast belief in Him. But I am persuaded that the word *faith* is too frequently misunderstood, and taken for a bare, careless, and faint assent, to any truth we pretend to believe ; which notion is not only deceitful and false, but pernicious and destructive. Therefore what is meant by a firm belief in God is, when, from intent meditation and mature reflection, the judgment, reason, understanding, and all the faculties of the soul, are overpowered with an irresistible conviction of the necessary existence of such a Divine Being ; which is also represented to the mind as infinite in glory, in pow-

er, in wisdom, in goodness, and in all perfection ; with such charms, such beauty, such loveliness, as to captivate and ravish the affections of the soul, and smite it with a divine love. Such a love as may possess it with an ardent desire after the enjoyment of him, with diligent endeavors to please him, and with incessant strivings to resemble him, and render itself amiable and acceptable to him. Such a love as may reign triumphantly in the soul, engrossing all its affections, divesting all other objects of their charms, nay, making them appear vile and contemptible, and delivering up the absolute and entire dominion of the soul to its great and glorious Creator. Accept, great God, of such an entire dominion over my soul, and be pleased to maintain it against all opposition and temptation whatsoever, by thy infinite power, for Jesus Christ's sake.

Perfect Love.

THERE IS NO FEAR IN LOVE. What then have we to say of him who has begun to fear the day of judgment ? If love were perfect in him, he would not fear : for perfect love would produce perfect righteousness, and he would have no cause for fear : nay, he would have cause to desire the passing away of iniquity, and

the coming of the kingdom of God. There is, then, no fear in love. But in what love? Not in incipient love. In what then? But perfect love, saith the Apostle, casteth out fear. Therefore, let fear begin the work: for the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Fear does, as it were, prepare a place for love. When, however, love hath begun to take possession, fear, which prepared a place for it; is cast out. For, in proportion to the growth of the former, is the decay of the latter: and the more deeply seated love comes to be in the heart, the more fear is cast out. The greater love, the less fear; the less love, the greater fear. If, however, there be no fear, love hath no means of entrance. Just as in sewing, we see that the thread is introduced by the needle; the needle enters first; but unless it pass out, the thread does not follow: thus fear first takes possession of the mind, but does not continue there, because it entered for the express purpose of bringing in love.

Inward Victory the Christian's Privilege.

THE difference between him who has, and him who knows nothing of, the power of religion, is infinite at all times: the difference between the natural man and the brute being, really, I may say, infinitely less. But

never can this be so strikingly evinced, as when a person grows in comfort just then when others are losing theirs. This is one momentous illustration of that Divine saying, "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you."

" *Multa ferunt anni venientes commoda secum,
Multa recedentes adimunt,*"

is the voice of a mere animal man. The crepuscule of philosophy showed something better than this:—"O præclarum munus ætatis, siquidem id aufert nobis quod est in adolescentiâ vitiosissimum:" which comes wonderfully near, "delighting in the law of God after the inward man." In short, as "those not having the law, were a law unto themselves," this sentiment is, clearly, a delighting in that law which was written in their hearts, and has, therefore, in it a constructive sense, approaching to that of St. Paul in the person of the Jew—"Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" But, beautiful and valuable as those sentiments of enlightened heathens are, and truly interesting as that fine tract, "De Senectute," is, what could Cicero or his Cato say which could bear the shadow of a comparison with that matter-of-fact observation of the eloquent and pious Wilberforce? "Among men of the world," says he, "a youth of softness and sweetness will often harden into insensibility, and sharpen into moroseness. But it is the office of Christianity to reverse this order. It is pleasing to witness this

blessed renovation : to see, as life advances, asperities gradually smoothing down, and roughnesses mellowing away ; while the subject of this happy change experiences, within, increasing measures of the comfort which he diffuses around him, and feeling the genial influence of that heavenly flame, which can thus give life, and warmth, and action to what had been hitherto rigid and insensible, looks up with gratitude to Him who has shed abroad this principle of love in his heart—”

“ ‘*Miraturque novas frondes, non, sed sua poma.*’ ”

This inward victory I take to be the great privilege of the Christian, strictly so called : it being only “the law of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” which “makes free from the law of sin and death” : and when this influence and feeling are realized, what a treasure they are ! What a heaven upon earth, to be delivered from the bondage of unsubdued, impassioned, unreasonable, silly, savage self, and its great bear-leader, the god of this world ! And this, too, but the negative blessing arising from the being interested in a positive good ; the immensity of which no thought can grasp, and to the boundless eternity of which the most heightened fancy cannot look forward. I often ask myself, “Am I sure of this ? Is there such a thing as being thus interested in the Sovereign of the Universe, the source of infinite comfort, the centre of unassailable

safety, the God of unfathomable love, of inconceivable wisdom, and of creative power?" And when I appear to have in my bosom, compared with the irrefragable Word of Truth, a matter-of-fact answer, I do indeed wonder at my own happiness, and am amazed how it should be my lot, when I must see it to be so rare a lot.

The Tuned Soul.

LET us allow Christ to speak through us. He desireth it more than we do : and by reason of this, he prepared this instrument, and would not have it remain useless and idle, but wisheth to keep it ever in hand. Why then dost thou not make it serviceable for the Maker's hand, but lettest it become unstrung, and makest it relaxed through luxury, and unfittest the whole harp for His use, when thou oughtest to keep the members of it in full stretch, and well strung, and braced with spiritual salt? For if Christ see our soul thus attuned, He will send forth His sounds even by it. And when this taketh place, then shalt thou see Angels leaping for joy, and Archangels too, and the Cherubim. Let us then become worthy of His spotless hands. Let us invite Him to strike even upon our heart. Or rather He needeth not any inviting. Only make it worthy of

that touch, and He will be foremost in running unto thee. For if, in consideration of their attainments not yet reached, He runneth to them when He seeth one fully furnished, what is there that He will not do? But if Christ shall sound forth, and the Spirit shall indeed light upon us, we shall be better than the heaven, having not the sun and the moon fixed in our body, but the Lord of both sun and moon and angels dwelling in us and walking in us.

Christian Elevation.

I.

THUS, Moses-like, conversing with God in the mount, and there beholding his glory shining thus out upon us, in the face of Christ, we should be deriving a copy of that eternal beauty upon our souls; and our thirsty and hungry spirits would be perpetually imbibing a true participation and image of his glory. A true divine love would wing our souls, and make them take their flight swiftly toward heaven and immortality. Could we once be thoroughly possessed and mastered with a full confidence of the divine love, and of God's readiness to assist such feeble, languishing creatures as

we are, in our essays after heaven and blessedness, we should then, finding ourselves borne up by an eternal and almighty strength, dare to adventure, courageously and confidently, upon the highest degrees of happiness, to assail the King of heaven with a holy gallantry and violence, to pursue a course of well-doing without weariness ; knowing that our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord, and that we shall receive our reward, if we faint not ; we should work out our salvation in the most industrious manner, trusting in God as one ready to instil strength and power into all the vital faculties of our souls : we should “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus, that we may apprehend that for which also we are apprehended of Christ Jesus.”

II.

The Saviour, by sending down his Spirit, leads us away from the old to the new polity, from the Jewish to the Christian dispensation, both opening to us the gates on high, and calling us to our country there with the greatest mark of dignity. For He hath not made us angels and archangels, but He hath caused us to become sons of God, and beloved, and so He draws us on toward that portion of ours.

Having then all this in thy mind, do thou show forth a life worthy of the love of Him who calls thee

unto thy citizenship in that world, and of the honor that is given thee. Crucified as thou art to the world, and having crucified it to thyself, show thyself with all strictness a citizen of the city of the heavens. And do not, because thy body is not translated unto heaven, suppose that thou hast anything to do with earth; for thou hast thy Head abiding above. Let us then keep watch over that noble birth, which we received from the beginning; and let us every day seek more and more the palaces there, and account all that is *here* to be a shadow and a dream.

Religious Perfection.

Its relation to life and happiness.

LIFE, perfection, and happiness, have a close and inseparable dependence on one another. For as life, which is the rational exercise and employment of our powers and faculties, does naturally advance on, and terminate in perfection; so perfection, which is nothing else but the maturity of human virtues, does naturally end in that rest and peace, that tranquillity, serenity, and joy of mind which we call happiness. Now perfection, in an abstracted and metaphysical notion of it, is a state that admits neither of accession nor dimi-

nution. But talking of it practically, and in a manner accommodated to the nature of things, the perfection of man consists in such endowments and attainments as man is generally capable of in this life. And because man may be considered either in relation to this, or to another world, therefore human perfection may be divided into religious and secular. By secular I mean that which regards our interest in this life: by religious, that which secures it in eternity. The one more directly and immediately aims at the favor of man; the other at the favor of God: the one pursues that happiness, whatever it be, that is to be found in outward and worldly advantages; the other, that which flows from virtue and a good conscience. It is easy now to discern which of these two kinds of perfection is the more desirable; the one purifies and exalts our nature, the other polishes and varnishes it; the one makes a gentleman, the other a true Christian; the success of the one is precarious, that of the other certain—having no dependence on time or chance, the humor or fancy of man; the pleasure of the one is short and superficial; that of the other great and lasting; the world admires the one, and God approves the other.

Some are apt to startle at the very mention of perfection; they have entertained such low thoughts, not only of human nature, but, as it seems, of Divine grace too, and evangelical righteousness, that all talk of perfection seems to them like the preaching a new gospel,

and an obtruding upon the world a fantastic scheme of proud and pretending morality. But this fear will soon vanish, when I tell such that I discourse of the perfection of men : and that I treat this, not like a monk, or a sublime and subtle school-man, but like one who has been daily conversant with the doubts and scruples, with the fears and frailties of human nature and departing souls. I do not pretend to bless the world with the discovery of new truths. If I place old ones in a better light ; if I wipe off the dust, which dispute and time and the corruption of manners has here and there scattered upon them, it is the utmost I aim at.

If any one be apprehensive that it is impossible to assert the doctrine of perfection, without looking a little too favorably toward Pelagianism or enthusiasm, I here state that I advance no perfection that raises men above the use or need of means, or invites them to neglect the word, prayer, or sacraments, or is raised on any other foundation than the Gospel of Christ. I revive not Pelagianism, nor clash with St. Augustine ; I need not those concessions which he makes Cœlestius in the close of his book “*De Perfectione Justitiæ*.” I am persuaded that the strength of nature is too slight a foundation to build perfection on : I contend for freedom from no other sin than actual, voluntary and deliberate ; and let concupiscence, or any unavoidable distemper, or disorder of our nature, be what it will, all that I aim at is the reducing, not extirpating it. And, finally, I can

very well content myself with St. Augustine's notion of it, namely, that it is nothing else but a daily progress toward that pure and unspotted holiness, which we shall attain to in another life.

The moral accomplishment of human nature.

Religion is nothing else but the purifying and refining nature by grace, the raising and exalting our faculties and capacities by wisdom and virtue. Religious perfection, therefore, is nothing else but the moral accomplishment of human nature ; such a maturity of virtue as man in this life is capable of ; conversion begins, perfection consummates the habit of righteousness : in the one religion is, as it were, in its infancy ; in the other, in its strength and manhood ; so that perfection, in short, is nothing else but a ripe and settled habit of true holiness. According to this notion of religious perfection, he is a perfect man whose mind is pure and vigorous, and his body tame and obsequious ; whose faith is firm and steady, his love ardent and exalted, and his hope full of assurance ; whose religion has in it that ardor and constancy, and his soul that tranquillity and pleasure, which bespeaks him a child of the light, and of the day, a partaker of the Divine nature, and raised above the corruption which is in the world through lust.

This account of religious perfection has manifestly the countenance both of reason and Scripture ; and how

contradictory soever some ancient and latter schemes of perfection seem to be, or really are, to one another, yet do they all agree in effect in what I have laid down. If we appeal to reason, no man can doubt, but that a habit of virtue has much more of excellence and merit in it than single accidental acts, or uncertain fits and passions; since an habit is not only the source and spring of the noblest actions, and the most elevated passions, but it renders us more regular and steady, more uniform and constant in everything that is good. As to good natural dispositions, they have little of strength, little of perfection in them, till they be raised and improved into habits. And as for our natural faculties, they are nothing else but the capacities of good or evil; they are undetermined to the one or other, till they are fixed and influenced by moral principles. It remains, then, that religious perfection must consist in an habit of righteousness, and a confirmed and well established one.

Wherever we find any mention of perfection in Scripture, if we examine the place well, we shall find nothing more intended than uprightness and integrity, an unblamable and unprovable life, a state well advanced in knowledge and virtue. Thus upright and perfect are used as terms equivalent (Job i.): "And that man was perfect and upright, fearing God and eschewing evil;" (Ps. xxxvii. 37), "Mark the perfect and behold the upright man, for the end of that man is

peace." Thus again when God exhorts Abraham to perfection (Gen. xvii. 1), "I am the Almighty God ; walk before me and be thou perfect ;" all that he exhorts him to, is a steady obedience to all his commandments, proceeding from a lively fear of, and faith in him ; and this is the general use of this word perfect throughout the Old Testament—namely, to signify a sincere and just man, that feareth God, and escheweth evil, and is well fixed and established in his duty. In the New Testament perfection signifies the same thing which it does in the Old ; that is, universal righteousness, and strength, and growth in it. Thus the perfect man (2 Tim. iii. 17) is one who is thoroughly furnished to every good work. Thus St. Paul tells us (Col. iv. 12) that Epaphras labored fervently in prayers for the Colossians, that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. In James i. 4, the perfect man is one who is entire, lacking nothing, i. e., one who is advanced to a maturity of virtue through patience and experience, and is fortified and established in faith, love, and hope. In this sense of the word *perfect*, St. Peter prays for those to whom he writes his epistle (1 Pet. v. 10): "But the God of all grace, who called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you." When St. Paul exhorts the Hebrews to go on to perfection (Heb. vi.), he means nothing by it but that state of manhood which consists

in a well-settled habit of wisdom and goodness. This is plain, first, from vers. 11, 12 of this chapter, where he himself more fully explains his own meaning: and we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope to the end; that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

A steady habit of holiness.

The utmost height to which the Scripture exhorts us is nothing more than a steady habit of holiness; that the brightest characters it gives of the perfect man, the loveliest descriptions it makes us of the perfectest state, are all made up of the natural and confessed properties of a ripe habit. There is no controversy about the nature of a habit; every man's experience instructs him in the whole philosophy of it; we are all agreed that it is a kind of second nature, that it makes us exert ourselves with desire and earnestness, with satisfaction and pleasure; that it renders us fixed in our choice, and constant in our actions, and almost as averse to those things which are repugnant as we are to those which are distasteful and disagreeable to our nature; for it so entirely and absolutely possesses the man, that the power of it is not to be resisted, nor the empire of it to be shaken off; nor can it be removed and extirpated without the greatest labor and difficulty imaginable. All this is a confest and almost palpable

truth in habits of sin ; and there is no reason why we should not ascribe the same force and efficacy to habits of virtue ; especially if we consider that the strength, easiness, and pleasure which belong naturally to these habits receive no small accession from the supernatural energy and vigor of the Holy Spirit.

Is habit in general a second nature ? This state of righteousness is in Scripture called “ the new man,” the “ new creature,” the “ Divine nature.” Does it consequently rule and govern man ? Hear how St. Paul expresses this power of the habit of holiness in himself : “ I am crucified with Christ ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” This is a constant effect of habits, and is equally discernible in those of vice and virtue, that they sway and govern the man they possess. “ Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey ; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness ? ”

One of the first properties of this habit is a great aversion to those things which are contrary to it, or obstruct us in the exercise of it ; this is directly the disposition of the sincere Christian toward temptations and sins ; he is now ashamed of those things which before he gloried in ; he is filled with an holy indignation against those things which before he took pleasure in ; and

what before he courted with fondness and passion, he now shuns with fear and vigilance. In brief, the Scripture describes such a one as possessed with an utter hatred and abhorrence of every evil way, and as an irreconcilable enemy to everything that is an enemy to his virtue and his God. Thus "I hate and abhor lying, but thy law do I love"; and therefore "I esteem all precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way." And this is a genuine and natural effect of integrity and uprightness of heart; whence it is the observation of our Saviour: "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one or love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other." And indeed every where a hatred, a perfect hatred of evil, is accounted as a necessary consequence of the love of God. "Ye that love the Lord hate evil:" and therefore the Psalmist resolves to practise himself what he prescribes to others: "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way: O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart: I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me."

It ensures freedom, delight and pleasure.

The second property of this habit is that the actions which flow from it are performed with ease and pleas-

ure. When the love of virtue, and the hatred of vice, have once rooted themselves in the soul, what can be more natural than to follow after the one, and shun the other? Since this is no more than embracing and enjoying what we love, and turning our backs on what we detest. This therefore is one constant character of perfection in Scripture: delight and pleasure are everywhere said to accompany the practice of virtue, when it is once grown up to strength and maturity: "The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." "Perfect love casteth out fear." And to him that loves, "the commandments of God are not grievous." Hence it is, that the good man's delight is in the law of the Lord, and that "he meditates therein day and night." Nor does he delight less in action than meditation, but grows in grace as much as knowledge; and abounds daily more and more in good works, as he increases in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Consonant to this property of perfection it is, that in Ps. xix. and cxix., and elsewhere frequently, we hear the Psalmist expressing a kind of inconceivable joy and transport in the meditation and practice of the commands of God.

In Scripture good men are everywhere represented as standing fast in the faith: steadfast and unmovable in the works of God; holding fast their integrity: in one word, as constantly following after righteousness, and maintaining a good conscience toward God and

man. And so natural is this to one habitually good, that St. John affirms of such a one, "that he cannot sin." "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God." Accordingly Job is said "to have feared God, and eschewed evil"; which must be understood of the constant course of his life. Zachary and Elizabeth are said to be "righteous, walking in all the commandments of God blameless." Enoch, Noah, David, and other excellent persons, who are pronounced by God righteous and just, are said in Scripture, "to walk with God, to serve him with a perfect heart, with a full purpose of heart to cleave to him." And this is that constancy which Christians are often exhorted to: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong."

The doctrine of perfection from Scripture no one can doubt of, unless he mistakes the main design and end of the Gospel; which is to raise and exalt us to a steady habit of holiness: "the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." This is the utmost perfection man is capable of, to have his mind enlightened and his heart purified; and to be informed, acted and influenced by faith and love, as by a vital principle: and all this is essential to habitual goodness.

If any one desire further light or satisfaction in this matter, let him read the eighth chapter to the Romans,

and he will find there the substance of what has been advanced on this subject. There, though the word itself be not found, the thing called perfection is described in all the strength and beauty, in all the pleasure and advantages of it; there the disciple of Jesus is represented as one "who walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"; as one "whom the law and Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set free from the law of sin and death"; one who "does not mind or relish the things of the flesh, but the things of the Spirit; one in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells": he does not stand at the door, and knock; he does not make a transient visit; but here he reigns, and rules, and inhabits: one, finally, in whom "the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness." And the result of all this is the joy and confidence, the security and transport, that become the child of God. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." And now it is no wonder if the perfect man long for the revelation of the glory of the sons of God; if he can cry out in rapture, "If God be for me, who can be against me! Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?" If any one would see the perfect Christian

described in fewer words, he need but cast his eye on Rom. vi. 22 : " But now being made free from sin, and become servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end of everlasting life."

Active, progressive, and victorious.

Many have entertained erroneous views about the attainment of perfection ; they talk and act as if perfection were the product, not of time and experience, but an instant ; as if it were to be infused in a moment, not acquired ; as if it were a mere arbitrary favor, not the fruit of meditation and discipline. It is true, it cannot be doubted by a Christian, but that perfection derives itself from heaven ; and that the seed of it is the grace of God : yet it is true also that we must watch and pray, and contend, labor, and persevere, and that long too, ere we can attain to it. And whosoever fancies himself rapt up into the third heaven on a sudden, will find himself as suddenly let down to the earth again, if he do not use his utmost diligence to fortify his resolutions, to cherish the new-born flame, and to guard and improve his virtues.

It is not asserted that there is any state in this life raised above trials and temptations. Alas ! the most perfect man will find it work enough to make good the ground he has gained, and maintain the conquest he has won ; much watchfulness and labor, much humility

and fear, and many other virtues are necessary to perseverance in a state of perfection ; nevertheless, if a man's life be very uneven, unconstant, and contradictory to itself ; if he be to-day a saint, and to-morrow a sinner ; if he yield to-day to the motives of the Gospel and impulses of the Spirit, and to-morrow to the solicitations of the flesh, and temptations of the world, he is far from being perfect ; so far, that there is not ground enough to conclude him a sincere or real, though imperfect convert. The only certain proof of regeneration is victory : " he that is born of God overcometh the world." Faith, though it be true, is not presently saving and justifying till it has subdued the will, and captivated the heart, i. e., till we begin to live by faith ; which is evident from that corn in the parable, which, though it shot up, yet it had not depth of earth, nor root enough, and therefore was withered up, and brought forth no fruit. Regret and sorrow for sin is an excellent passion, but till it has subdued our corruptions, changed our affections, and purified our hearts, it is not saving repentance. " Godly sorrow worketh repentance, not to be repented of." We may have sudden heats and passions for virtue ; but if they be too short-lived to implant it in us, that is not that charity or love which animates and impregnates the new creature mentioned, Gal. v. 4, " Faith which worketh by love." We may have good purposes, intentions, and resolutions ; but if these prove too weak to obtain a

conquest over our corruptions ; if they prove too weak to resist the temptations we are wont to fall by, it is plain that they are not such as demonstrate us righteous, or entitle us to the crown, which is promised to him that overcometh. If any one demand, may not that faith which is foiled to-day, conquer to-morrow ? I answer, this must be left to God ; as the sincerity of the heart can be judged of only by the outward deportment. And if this be the proper way of judging of one's sincerity, it may with confidence be affirmed that nothing less than victory can be a clear argument of perfection.

Winged Piety.

THE methods in which we may go wrong, are innumerable ; that in which we can be right, is but one. But there may be also a mode of proceeding not positively wrong—that is not criminal—but rather less right ; from which the Divine Shepherd would wish to raise, to a more excellent way, those whom He specially loves : for, that He does love some specially, we may infer from his conduct on this earth. For example, “Jesus loved Martha,” as well as “her sister and Lazarus.” And because He loved Martha, He wished to make her like Mary. Instead of being “careful and

troubled about many things," he was earnest she should feel that "one thing was needful." Not that she was actually insensible to it, but that she was rather not enough impressed with it. And, obviously what our Lord wished to bring her to was what St. Paul afterward expressed, with evident allusion to this very part of the Gospel history, "that ye may wait upon the Lord without distraction."

Doubtless, this is the grand object to which all the movements of Providence point. "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is staid on Thee." And, most surely, it is not by relinquishing other lawful and necessary objects that this is generally to be attained, but by gaining an ascendancy over them, and a command of one's mind in the midst of them; by virtue of which we can turn to them and from them at our pleasure; and thus give neither more time nor thought to anything than the doing it well actually requires; but when we lay it down, may be able there to leave it until it be proper to return to it again.

This is a great power; but it is essentially contained in "waiting on the Lord without distraction." The one cannot be accomplished without the other. We must be distracted if we have not this self-command. It is the privilege of winged souls only. They that struggle along on the ground must be tossed and jostled. But he who can fly escapes all this, and moves forward unobstructed, and at his ease. We can-

not give ourselves these wings ; but God can ; and will, if we ask him with all our heart. Most surely, the person that flies is the true person of business ; for, to such a one, every spot below is seen at once ; and the mind can descend at its pleasure, and always hit the point it would be at, and then ascend again.

Christian Perfection.

I.

WE hold no perfection that excludes weakness. In fact, this term means, not a mind raised above temptation, but a heart free from dividedness and deceitfulness ; so that, though there may be wanderings in abundance from the point in hand, there is no wandering of heart from God ; no other settled idea of happiness is admitted into the mind ; St. John's direction is obeyed, " Little children, keep yourselves from idols." In a word, we can only believe in a perfection of principle : " If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light," but every possible degree of goodness here has a still higher degree above it ; so no immutable habit in this lower world. True Christian perfection unites humility with confidence, and tenderness with liberty. Above all, it derives its strength

never from merely moral, but supremely from evangelic sources : “ I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Phil. iv. 13.

II.

There is a sort of God’s dear servants who walk in perfectness ; who perfect holiness in the fear of God ; and they have a degree of charity, and divine knowledge, more than we can discourse of, and more certain than the demonstrations of geometry ; brighter than the sun, and indeficient as the light of heaven. This is called by the Apostle “ the brightness of God.” Christ is this brightness of God, manifested in the heart of his dearest servants. “ He applies the torch of wisdom to the minds of pure men.”

But I shall say no more of this at this time ; for this is to be felt, and not to be talked of ; and they that never touched it with their finger, may secretly, perhaps, laugh at it in their heart, and be never the wiser. All that I can now say of it is, that a good man is united unto God, as a flame touches a flame, and combines into splendor and glory : so is the spirit of a man united unto Christ by the Spirit of God. These are the friends of God ; and they best know God’s mind ; and they only that are so, know how such men do know.

Communion with God.

COMMUNION with God implies the unreserved opening of our hearts to him. If a single cell be kept closed, it is a wall of partition between us. Then it is, therefore, that we ascertain whereabouts we are, amid the wide regions of existence ; then we search and try our spirit ; then we sound the depths of our affections ; then, like blossoms to the sun, we put forth all our understanding, all our imagination, all our memory, . . . exercise all the prerogatives given us, above the rest of the tribes of creation, as being formed in the image of God. Then, therefore, it is, that coming to a full knowledge of ourselves, and having our faculties quickened, we acutely discern and condemn our unholiness and infirmities ; then we acknowledge and confess our unworthiness ; and then we perceive distinctly the unbounded mercies of God, and rise from fear, and sorrow, and doubt, . . . to hope, and love, and joy. Then our connection with the world to come, our prize of immortality, is distinctly assured. Then is a conversation going on between us and our God : between the Creator and the thing created ; between the Giver and receiver ; between immortality and mortality : . . . and, as the one opens his bosom, the other pours forth his treasure into it ; as the one offers homage and allegiance, the other

dispenses his royal bounties. Such communion have we with God, through our high priest, Jesus Christ.

Prelibation of Heaven.

I.

THE life is the valley which holy men are, in the affections of their mind, evermore anxious to quit, and to ascend to that ineffable good, to that joy which passeth all understanding, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man. Albeit they seem bodily, indeed, to be among men, yet they lift up their souls to heavenly things; and, clinging to that pure and supreme good, immortal and perpetual, they forsake things temporal and perishable, and, raised above the world, they repose in the arms of divine contemplation. There, in that celestial temple, they, with the eyes of their heart, behold God: nay, they even come, themselves, to be stones in the structure of that temple.

II.

It is not for any mortal creature to make a map of that Canaan which lies above: it is, to all of us, who live here, on the hither side of death, an unknown

country, and an undiscovered land. It may be that some heavenly pilgrim, who, with his holy thoughts and holy desires, is continually travelling thitherward, arrives, sometimes, near the borders of the promised land and the suburbs of the new Jerusalem, and gets upon the top of Pisgah, and there has the perfect prospect of a fair country, which lies a far way off; but he cannot tell how to describe it; and all that he hath to say, to satisfy the curious inquirer, is only this: if he would know the glories of it, he must go and see it.

PART VI.

PROMISES of temporal good, in the New Testament, are in general made with express limitation ; and it is everywhere implied, that their fulfilment is to be regulated by its consistency with our spiritual and eternal interests. We are uniformly assured that God “doth not willingly afflict, nor grieve the children of men” ; and yet we see St. Paul beseeching the Lord thrice that an affliction might depart from him ; and after all, receiving only an assurance of sufficient grace, but not of specific deliverance. I cannot but consider this case of St. Paul as replete with instruction to all Christians in all ages. It clearly and forcibly teaches that we may rely upon God for grace to sustain and improve our lot in life ; but that the ordering of our circumstances must be left implicitly to the unerring wisdom of our heavenly Father.—ALEXANDER KNOX.

PART VI.

Adversity.

I.

To speak in a mean, the virtue of prosperity is temperance; the virtue of adversity is fortitude, which in morals is the more heroical virtue. Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament; adversity is the blessing of the New, which carrieth the greater benediction, and the clearer revelation of God's favor. Yet even in the Old Testament, if you listen to David's harp, you shall hear as many hearse-like airs as carols; and the pencil of the Holy Ghost has labored more in describing the afflictions of Job than the felicities of Solomon. Prosperity is not without many fears and distastes; and adversity is not without comforts and hopes. We see in needle-works and embroideries it is more pleasing to have a lively work upon a sad and solemn ground, than

to have a dark and melancholy work upon a lightsome ground : judge, therefore, of the pleasure of the heart by the pleasure of the eye. Certainly virtue is like precious odors, most fragrant where they are incensed or crushed ; for prosperity doth best discover vice, but adversity doth best discover virtue.

Not only knowledge, but also every other gift (which we call the gifts of fortune), has power to puff up earth ; afflictions only level these mole-hills of pride, plough the heart, and make it fit for wisdom to sow her seed, and for grace to bring forth her increase. Happy is that man, therefore, both in regard of heavenly and earthly wisdom, who is thus wounded to be cured ; thus broken to be made straight ; thus made acquainted with his own imperfections, that he may be perfected !

This is certain : the mind that is most prone to be puffed up with prosperity, is most weak and apt to be dejected with the least puff of adversity.

II.

In any adversity that happens to us in the world, we ought to consider that misery and affliction are not less natural than snow and hail, storm and tempest : and that it were as reasonable to hope for a year without winter, as for a life without trouble. Life, how sweet

soever it seems, is a draught mingled with bitter ingredients. Some drink deeper than others, before they come at these ingredients : but, if they do not swim at the top for youth to taste them, it is ten to one but old age will find them thick in the bottom. And it is the employment of faith and patience, and the work of wisdom and virtue, to teach us to drink the sweet part down with pleasure and thankfulness, and to swallow the bitter without reluctance.

III.

It is good for man to suffer the adversity of this earthly life ; for it brings him back to the sacred retirement of the heart, where only he finds that the heart is an exile from his native home, and ought not to place his trust in any worldly enjoyment. It is good for him also to meet with contradiction and reproach ; to be evil thought of, and evil spoken of, even when his intentions are upright, and his actions blameless ; for this keeps him humble, and is a powerful antidote to the poison of vain-glory. When we are outwardly despised and held in no degree of esteem and favor among men, then chiefly it is that we have recourse to the witness within us, which is God. Our dependence upon God ought to be so entire and absolute that we should never think it necessary, in any kind of distress, to have recourse to human consolations.

When a regenerate man is sinking under adversity, or disturbed and tempted by evil thoughts, then he feels the necessity of the power and presence of God in his soul, without which he certainly knows that he can neither bear evil nor do good; then he grieves and prays, and “groans to be delivered from the bondage of corruption”; then, weary of living in vanity, he wishes to “die, that he may be dissolved, and be with Christ”; and then he is fully convinced that absolute security and perfect rest are not compatible with his present state of life.

Temptations.

As long as we continue in this world, we cannot possibly be free from the trouble and anguish of temptation. In confirmation of this truth, it is written in Job that “the life of man upon earth is a continual warfare.” Every one, therefore, ought to be attentive to the temptations that are peculiar to his own spirit, and to persevere in watchfulness and prayer, lest his “adversary, the devil, who never sleepeth, but continually goeth about, seeking whom he may devour,” should find some unguarded place where he may enter with his delusions.

The highest degree of holiness attainable by man is no security against the assaults of temptation, from which his present life is not capable of absolute exemption. But temptations, however dangerous and afflicting, are highly beneficial, because, under their discipline we are humbled, purified, and led toward perfection. All the followers of Christ have, through "much tribulation and affliction, entered into the kingdom of God;" and those that could not endure the trial, have "fallen from the faith and expectation of the saints, and become reprobate."

There is no order of men, however holy, nor any place, however secret and remote, where and among whom temptations will not come for the exercise of meekness, and troubles arise for the trial of patient resignation. And that this must be the condition of human nature in the present life is evident, because it is born in sin, and contains in itself those restless and inordinate desires which are the ground of every temptation: so that when one temptation is removed, another succeeds; and we shall always have some degree of evil to suffer, till we recover the purity and perfection of that state from which we have fallen.

Many, by endeavoring to fly from temptations, have fallen precipitately into them; for it is not by flight, but by patience and humility, that we must become superior to all our enemies. He who only declines the outward occasion, and strives not to eradicate the in

ward principle, is so far from conquest that the temptation will recur the sooner, and with greater violence, and he will feel the conflict still more severe. It is by gradual advances, rather than by impetuous efforts, that victory is obtained ; rather by patient suffering that looks up to God for support, than by impatient solicitude and rigorous austerity.

In thine own temptations, often ask counsel of those that have been tried, and have overcome ; and in the temptations of thy brother, treat him not with severity, but tenderly administer the comfort which you desire to receive.

That which renders the first assaults of temptation peculiarly severe and dangerous, is the instability of our own minds, arising from the want of faith in God ; and as a ship without a steersman is driven about by the force of contrary winds, so an unstable man, that has no faith in God, is tossed and borne away upon the wave of every temptation.

“ Gold is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity.” We frequently know not the strength that is hidden in us till temptation calls it forth, and shows us how much we are able to sustain. We must not, however, presume, but be particularly upon our guard against the first assaults ; for the enemy will be more easily subdued if he is resisted in his approaches, and not suffered to enter the portal of our hearts. A certain poet gives this advice :

“Take physic early ; medicines come too late,
When the disease is grown inveterate.”

And the caution may be successfully applied to the assaults of sin, the progress of which is gradual and dangerous. Evil is at first presented to the mind by a single suggestion ; the imagination kindled by the idea seizes it with strength, and feeds upon it ; this produces sensual delight, then the motions of inordinate desire, and at length the full consent of the will. Thus, the malignant enemy, not resisted in his first attack, enters by gradual advances, and takes entire possession of the heart : and the longer opposition is deferred by habitual negligence, the power of opposing becomes every day less, and the strength of the adversary proportionably greater.

To some, temptations are more severe at the beginning of their religious course ; to others at the end : some are afflicted with them during the whole of life ; and some experience comparatively short and gentle trials. This variety is adjusted by the wisdom and equity of Divine Providence, which hath weighed the different states and dispositions of men, and ordered all its dispensations so as most effectually to tend to the salvation of all. Therefore, when we are tempted, let us not despair ; but rather with more animated fervors of faith, hope, and love, pray to God that he would

vouchsafe to support us under all our trials, and, in the language of St. Paul, "with every temptation, to make also a way to escape," that we may be able to bear it. "Let us humble our souls under the hand of God," who hath promised to "save and exalt the lowly and meek."

By these trials, proficiency in the Christian life is proved. The power of divine grace is more sensibly felt in ourselves, and the fruits of it are more illustriously apparent to others. It is, indeed, a little matter for a man to be holy and devout, when he feels not the pressure of any evil: but if, in the midst of troubles, he maintains his faith, his hope, his resignation, and "in patience possesses his soul," he gives a considerable evidence of a regenerate nature. Some, however, who have been blest with victory in combating temptations of the most rigorous kind, are yet suffered to fall even by the lightest that arise in the occurrences of daily life; that being humbled by the want of power to resist such slight attacks, they may never presume upon their own strength to repel those that are more severe.

Affliction.

I.

SEEK not to dry up the stream of sorrow, but to bound it and keep it within its banks. Religion doth not destroy the life of nature, but adds to it a life more excellent ; yea, it doth not only permit, but requires some feeling of afflictions. Instead of patience, there is in some men an affected pride of spirit, suitable only to the doctrine of the Stoics as it is usually taken. They strive not to feel at all the afflictions that are on them ; but where there is no feeling at all, there can be no patience.

Of the sects of ancient philosophy the Stoic is, perhaps, the nearest to Christianity. Yet even to this sect Christianity is fundamentally opposite. For the Stoic attaches the highest honor to the person that acts virtuously in spite of his feelings, or who has raised himself above the conflict by their extinction ; while Christianity instructs us to place small reliance on a virtue that does not begin by bringing the feelings to a conformity with the commands of the conscience. Its especial aim, its characteristic operation, is to moralize the affections. The feelings that oppose a right act, must be wrong feelings.

II.

That afflictions may improve the mind and heart, as calling into exercise Christian virtues already in substance possessed, cannot be disputed ; and it is in this view that writers are most disposed to consider them. But, in my opinion, the great providential end of privations and trials is to compel us by felt necessity to cleave more directly and more intensely to the sole source of inward strength and comfort. The exigence, whatever it be, which obliges us to make God, unequivocally, our refuge, is invaluable, be it ever so painful : for we cannot, even by our most upright endeavors, give wings to our soul, or surmount the sluggishness of our animal nature. But when our efforts are really honest, it is certain the Divine goodness never fails to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves ; and I believe that the chief method is to place us in such straits, that we must either sink, or be supported by Divine strength and consolation. We then learn to pray as we never prayed before ; and we are experimentally taught what our Redeemer meant when he said, “ My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”

It is good to be religious in any sincere degree ; it is good to fear God, and to regard the voice of conscience : but it is an unspeakable happiness to be drawn,

by whatever means, into that inner sanctuary where, through daily and hourly converse of the heart with God, we may be more and more “satisfied with the plenteousness” of his “house and drink of” his “pleasures as out of a river.”

And what crowns this consolation is, that the access to God, which is obtained through the pressure of affliction, when once really obtained, does not pass away when that pressure is removed. Though we seek the Divine influence from compulsion, the blessing, when found, will attract us to itself; so that we may not afterward require the same corrective discipline, but retain, as our chief delight and treasure, what we had found our refuge in the day of adversity. We will not say that this is always the case, but trust it is a general fact; and wherever affliction leads to the settled habit of inward and spiritual prayer, it surely, at least, lays the foundation of present and everlasting peace.

I have often thought that few things recorded in the sacred Scripture are more remarkable than those words of St. Luke:—“and being in agony, he prayed more earnestly.” It appears, then, that even in our Lord himself, considered as a human being, there was room for devotional excitement; and it would seem to have been with reference to this height of earnestness, that it is said in the Epistle to the Hebrews, “he was heard in that he feared.” Had our Lord’s mind alone been concerned, we may believe his fervor would have been as

great at the first as it was at the last. But animal nature requires an impulse suited to itself. And as long as we inhabit houses of clay, the most upright motion of the mere mind will be comparatively defective. Therefore, at suitable times, afflictions are sent to spur the sluggishness of human nature, and to raise the inner man to that ardent importunity, which perhaps, according to the laws of our frame, may be as necessary to capacitate us for the reception of higher spiritual blessings, as what they call a welding heat is necessary in order to two pieces of iron being hammered into one.

In this instance, we might most reasonably say, "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master." If he, in a natural way, was not above the want of a stimulant, how deeply must we require it! Yet it is also true that His sufferings, as Captain of our salvation, have reduced to a comparative nothing the painful discipline indispensable to our well-being. In him, the Christian graces were, as if, in the first instance, to be prepared and substantiated, in order that from him, as from a fountain-head, they might be communicated to all who in successive ages should be made members of his mystical body. In order to our fully receiving such communications, it may, in the nature of things, be necessary that we should, in some small degree, participate in what our Redeemer felt, while he was, as it were, preparing those graces. But, certainly, it is in a small

degree : and no doubt even that degree apportioned to the strength, or rather to the exigence, of the party ; that is, no more suffering allotted than is, on the whole, necessary for the beneficial purpose ; for “ He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.”

But there is even a less mysterious reason for this Divine process : it is only in a certain degree of affliction that some of the most valuable, I would say, even the most delicate and endearing, provisions of evangelic aid can be adequately appreciated or felt. The mild brilliancy of the stars is invisible while the sun is above the horizon. It was only in the night that the Psalmist could have conceived that beautiful thought,—“ When I consider the heavens, the works of thy fingers, the moon and stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him ? ” Similarly, while in the most innocent way we are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, however sincerely even then “ we may set God always before us,” the feeling of our dependence for inward support and consolation cannot be so vivid as when we sensibly feel that nothing but God’s gracious influence can make our state supportable. As then, on the whole, we cannot question but that every pain which we are made to suffer, with this merciful view, is substantially profitable ; so I doubt not but we may conclude the amount of absolute pleasure to be far greater in this way than it could be in any other.

There is certainly no sensible delight in this world equal to what is felt when the mysterious magnetism of Divine things consciously attracts and fixes the heart : the state of things, therefore, in which the heart is most capable of being thus attracted and fixed, must be that also which admits of the highest possible enjoyment.

We are always weak, and we are occasionally afflicted : to help our weakness we need grace ; to assuage our affliction we need consolation. In some respects, however, this is very like a distinction without a difference ; for weakness is affliction, and grace is consolation. But the truth is, that we do not feel our purely spiritual necessities sufficiently, when we are sensible of no other necessities ; therefore, to teach even St. Paul the full value of Divine grace, there was given to him (*given*, as if it were a blessing) a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to buffet him. And when he repeatedly asked for deliverance, he was at length told that this affliction was, as it were, a dark ground, without which the Divine Redeemer's influence could not manifest its brightness ; a contrast without which dull human nature could not perfectly relish the blessing, however intrinsically excellent.

Accordingly St. Paul adds, from his own feeling, his cordial testimony to the fitness of the arrangement : “ Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.” I will not weaken these

words by attempting any paraphrase. They say all I have been attempting to say, with a force that no words could heighten.

Life, a State of Probation.

SINCE, amidst much happiness, and amidst contrivances for happiness, so far as we can judge, misery, and very considerable portions of it, do exist, it becomes a natural inquiry, to what end this mixture of good and evil is properly adapted. The Scriptures place before us, not only the true, but the most rational and satisfactory answer which can be given to the inquiry—namely, that it is intended for a state of trial and probation. For it appears capable of proof, both that no state but one which contained in it an admixture of good and evil would be suited to this purpose; and also, that our present state, as well in its general place as in its particular properties, serves this purpose with peculiar propriety.

A state totally incapable of misery could not be a state of probation. It would not be a state in which virtue or vice could even be exercised at all; that is, that large class of virtues and vices which we comprehend under the name of social duties. The existence of these depends upon the existence of misery as

well as of happiness in the world, and of different degrees of both ; because their very nature and difference consist in promoting or preventing, in augmenting or diminishing, in causing, aggravating, or relieving the wants, sufferings, and distress of our fellow-creatures. Compassion, charity, humanity, benevolence, and even justice, could have no place in the world, if there were not human conditions to excite them ; objects and sufferings upon which they might operate : misery, as well as happiness, which might be affected by them.

Nor would the purposes of trial be sufficiently provided for by a state in which happiness and misery regularly followed virtue and vice ; that is, in which there was no happiness but what was merited by virtue ; no misery but what was brought on by vice. Such a state would be a state of retribution, not a state of probation. It may be our state hereafter ; it may be a better state, but it is not a state of probation ; it is not the state through which it is fitting we should pass before we enter into the other ; for when we speak of a state of probation we speak of a state in which the character may both be put to the proof, and also its good qualities confirmed and strengthened, if not formed and produced by having occasions presented, in which they may be called forth and required. Now besides that the social qualities which have been mentioned would be very limited in their exercise if there was no evil in the world but what was plainly a pun-

ishment—besides this difficulty, there is another class of most important duties, which would be in a great measure excluded. They are the severest, the sublimest, perhaps the most meritorious, of which we are capable; I mean patience and composure under distress, pain, and affliction; a steadfast keeping up of our confidence in God, and our dependence upon his final goodness, even at the time that everything present is discouraging and adverse; and, what is no less difficult to retain, a cordial desire for the happiness and comfort of others, even then, when we are deprived of our own. The perfection of this temper is almost the perfection of our nature. But it is then only possessed, when it is put to the trial: tried at all it could not have been in a life made up only of pleasure and gratification. Few things are easier than to perceive, to feel, to acknowledge, to extol the goodness of God, the bounties of Providence, the beauties of nature, when all things go well; when our health, our spirits, our circumstances, conspire to fill our heart with gladness, and our tongues with praise. This is easy—this is delightful. None but they who are sunk in sensuality, sottishness, and stupefaction, or whose understandings are dissipated by frivolous pursuits; none but the most giddy and insensible can be destitute of these sentiments. But this is not the trial, or the proof. It is in the chambers of sickness; under the stroke of affliction; amidst the pinchings of want, the groans of pain, the pressures of in-

firmity ; in grief, in misfortune ; through gloom and horror, that it will be seen whether we hold fast our hope, our confidence, our trust in God ; whether this hope and confidence be able to produce in us resignation, acquiescence, and submission. And as those dispositions, which perhaps form the comparative perfection of our moral nature, could not have been exercised in a world of unmixed gratification, so neither would they have found their proper office or object in a state of strict and evident retribution ; that is, in which we had no sufferings to submit to, but what were evidently and manifestly the punishment of our sins. A mere submission to punishment, evidently and plainly such, would not have constituted, at least would very imperfectly have constituted, the disposition which we speak of, the true resignation of a Christian.

It seems therefore to be argued with very great probability, from the general economy of things around, that our present state was meant for a state of probation ; because positively it contains that admixture of good and evil, which ought to be found in such a state to make it answer its purpose, the production, exercise, and improvement of virtue ; and because, negatively, it could not be intended either for a state of absolute happiness, or a state of absolute misery, neither of which it is.

The Warfare.

OUR Lord has said, that from the coming of John the Baptist, that is to say, from his coming in the heart of every believer, "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Before we are touched from on high, we have nothing but the weight of our own concupiscence, which bears us down to earth. But when God is pleased to draw us up toward Himself, these two contrary efforts produce that violence, which God alone is able to overcome. "But we can do all things," as St. Leo observes, "with Him, without whom we can do nothing." We must therefore resolve to endure this warfare all our life long, for there is no such thing as peace. "Jesus Christ came not to send peace on earth, but a sword." Nevertheless we must acknowledge that, as the Scripture says, "The wisdom of men is foolishness with God." So we may say that this war, hard as it appears to many, is peace with God," and this is the peace which Jesus Christ has brought. But it will not be perfect till the destruction of the body. And this it is that makes us wish for death; bearing, however, with life, for the love of Him who suffered both life and death for us, and who, as St. Paul expresses it, "is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think."

The Duties of Life.

THE delivery of the talent is the call : it is the call of Providence, the call of Heaven. The supply of the means is the requisition of duty. When we find ourselves in possession of faculties and opportunities, whether arising from the endowments and qualities of our minds, or from the advantages of fortune and station, we need ask for no further evidence of the intention of the donor : we ought to see in that intention a demand upon us for the use and application of what has been given. This is a principle of natural as well as revealed religion ; and it is universal.

The truth is, every man has his work. The kind of work varies, and that is all the difference there is. A great deal of labor exists besides that of the hands ; many species of industry besides bodily operation, equally necessary, requiring equal assiduity, more attention, more anxiety. It is not true, therefore, that men of elevated stations are exempted from work ; it is only true, that there is assigned to them work of a different kind : whether more easy, or more pleasant, may be questioned ; but certainly not less wanted, not less essential to the common good. Were this maxim once properly received as a principle of conduct, it would put men of fortune and rank upon inquiring, what were the opportunities of doing good, which in a more especial manner

belonged to their situation or condition ; and were this principle carried into anything like its full effect, or even were this way of thinking sufficiently inculcated, it would completely remove the invidiousness of elevated stations. Mankind would see in them this alternative : if such men discharged the duties which were attached to the advantages they enjoyed, they deserved these advantages : if they did not, they were, morally speaking, in the situation of a poor man who neglected his business and his calling, and in no better. And the proper reflection in both cases is the same : the individual is in a high degree culpable, yet the business and the calling beneficial and expedient.

The habit and the disposition which we wish to recommend, namely, that of casting about for opportunities of doing good, readily seizing those which accidentally present themselves, and faithfully using those which naturally and regularly belong to our situations, appear to be sometimes checked by a notion very natural to active spirits, and to flattered talents. They will not be content to do little things. They will either attempt mighty matters or do nothing. The small effect which the private endeavors of an individual can produce upon the mass of social good is so lost, and so unperceived, in the comparison, that it neither deserves, they think, nor rewards the attention which it requires. The answer is, that the comparison which thus discourages them ought never to be made. The good

which their efforts can produce may be too minute to bear any sensible proportion to the sum of public happiness, yet may be their share; may be enough for them. The proper question is not, whether the good we aim at be great or little in comparison with the whole; but whether it be the most which it is in our power to perform. A single action may be, as it were, nothing to the aggregate of moral good; so also may be the agent. It may still, therefore, be the proportion which is required of *him*. In all things, nature works by numbers. Her greatest effects are achieved by the joint operation of multitudes of, separately considered, insignificant individuals. It is enough for each that it executes its office. It is not its concern, because it does not depend upon its will, what place that office holds in, or what proportion it bears to, the general result. Let our only comparison therefore be between our opportunities and the use which we make of them. When we would extend our views, or stretch out our hand, to distant and general good, we are commonly lost and sunk in the magnitude of the subject. Particular good, and the particular good which lies within our reach, are all we are concerned to attempt, or to inquire about. Not the smallest effort will be forgotten; not a particle of our virtue will fall to the ground. Whether successful or not, our endeavors will be recorded; will be estimated, not according to the proportion they bear, but according to the relation which they hold to our means

and opportunities ; according to the disinterestedness, the sincerity, with which we undertook, the pains and perseverance with which we carried them on. It may be true, and it appears to be the doctrine of Scripture, that the right use of great faculties or great opportunities will be more highly rewarded than the right use of inferior faculties and less opportunities. He that with ten talents had made ten talents, was placed over ten cities. The neglected talent was also given to him. He who with five talents had made five more, though pronounced to be a good and faithful servant, was placed only over five cities. This distinction might, without any great harshness to our moral feelings, be resolved into the will of the Supreme Benefactor : but we can see, perhaps, enough of the subject to perceive that it was just. The merit may reasonably be supposed to have been more in one case than the other. The danger, the activity, the care, the solicitude, were greater. Still both received rewards, abundant beyond measure, when compared with the services, equitable and proportioned when compared with one another.

The End of Life.

EVERY one that wishes you well, seeing you have a convenient and pleasant house, to show their kindness, are apt to wish that you may live long to enjoy it: which you take very kindly of them, since you know their wishes are correspondent to their own natural desires. Though at the same time you perceive that their notions of life and happiness are very different from yours. For you cannot think this life worth desiring, barely upon account of pleasure; and you would be ashamed to put up so unworthy a petition to the all-wise God, as to prolong your life, for no other end than for the short and insignificant enjoyments that attend it. As if there were no expectation of a more complete and perfect happiness than what we enjoy in this world; as if the flesh and blood with which our souls are invested, were the only vehicles of pleasure; and by consequence, as if the Almighty Creator had made creatures to be more happy than himself, and those innumerable companies of blessed spirits who rejoice in the beams of his glory. God is infinitely gracious to man: indulging him in the innocent gratification of his appetites, and supplying his wants, while he continues in this world. But that is a very wrong reason why a man should desire that he may never go out of this world. He ought to consider that his conveniences are

suitcd to the necessities of this life, and are no longer useful than that lasts ; and it were unreasonable to expect that his life should be lengthened and proportioned to his conveniences. As long as we live in this world, a house is necessary ; but it is not necessary to live, because we have a house. So long as cold weather lasts, a cloak is necessary ; but nobody would wish the continuance of ill weather, because he had a cloak. This life, of which we are so fond, is but the dawning to life ; and we must be conducted through that gloomy, but short passage of death, into the bright and perfect day, that shall be eternally enlightened by the splendor of the divine glories in heaven. It is immortality that makes life a desirable blessing ; without this, it would be but an unprofitable and burthensome trifle, preserved with anxiety, and quitted with terror. And how great a weakness of faith must we discover, when we are capable of preferring a bauble of a house, before the eternal enjoyment of the Almighty God ; who will first enlarge all the capacities of the soul to love, desire, resemble, and adore him, and then abundantly replenish it with suitable gratifications. There the soul, languishing and thirsting after wisdom and truth, will have free access to the blessed and eternal fountain of them, to satiate itself with boundless draughts of delight : there it may ever gratify, ever satisfy, without ever extinguishing, its immeasurable desires. For the pleasures of the soul are quite different from those of sense, which are de-

stroyed by fruition ; as they must needs be, since pleasure, which has its entire existence in desire, must necessarily increase and abate, live and perish, with it. But, though pleasure has its existence in desire, yet desire is so far from being productive of pleasure, that it always creates pain and uneasiness, so long as the desire remains wholly unsatisfied. For, though nothing pleases us but what we like and desire, yet we must have some sort of enjoyment of which we like, before it can give us pleasure : and, for this reason, the hungering and thirsting after righteousness, is very different from the hungering and thirsting after meat and drink. The thirsting of David's soul after the living God, was very different from that of the hart after the water brooks, though the allusion is very lively and elegant. For none ever thirst after God and righteousness but those who, in some measure, already enjoy the one and possess the other. And, from the knowledge of the pleasure arising from that lesser degree of enjoyment and possession, they are still desiring and thirsting after a greater. Happy, notwithstanding, in what they possess and enjoy, and ravished with the assured expectation of a more full and complete felicity, full in its abundance, and complete in its duration. Whereas, in the natural hunger and thirst of the body, it is pain and want that create the desire ; and pleasure proceeds only from the ceasing of the pain, and relieving of the want ; which makes it differ extremely from the other cases

where the want of enjoyment is continually relieved, and the present supplies which God affords to the eager desire at once gratify and inflame it.

A Future State.

I.

BEFORE our Saviour's time, the doctrine of a future state, though it were not wholly hid, yet it was not clearly known in the world. It was an imperfect view of reason, or, perhaps, the decayed remains of ancient tradition, which seemed rather to float on men's fancies than sink deep into their hearts. It was something, they knew not what, between being and not being. Something in a man they imagined might escape the grave; but a perfect, complete life, of an eternal duration, after this, was what entered little into their thoughts, and less into their persuasions. And they were so far from being clear herein, that we see no nation of the world publicly professed it; no religion taught it; and it was nowhere made an article of faith and principle of religion until Jesus Christ came; of whom it is truly said, that he, at his appearing, "brought life and immortality to light." And that not only in the clear revelation of it, and in instances shown of

men raised from the dead, but he has given us an unquestionable assurance and pledge of it in his own resurrection and ascension into heaven. How has this one truth changed the nature of things in the world, and given the advantage to piety over all that could tempt or deter men from it ! The philosophers, indeed, showed the beauty of virtue ; they set her off so, as drew men's eyes and approbation to her ; but leaving her unendowed, very few were willing to espouse her. The generality could not refuse their esteem and commendation ; but still turned their backs on her, and forsook her, as a match not for their turn. But now, there being put into the scales on her side “ an exceeding and immortal weight of glory,” interest is come about to her, and virtue now is visibly the most enriching purchase, and by much the best bargain. That she is the perfection and excellency of our nature, that she is herself a reward, and will recommend our names to future ages, is not all that can now be said of her. It is not strange that the learned heathens satisfied not many with such airy commendations. It has another relish and efficacy to persuade men that, if they live well here, they shall be happy hereafter. Open their eyes upon the endless, unspeakable joys of another life, and their hearts will find something solid and powerful to move them. The view of heaven or hell will cast a slight upon the short pleasures and pains of this present state, and give attractions and encouragements to virtue,

which reason and interest, and the care of ourselves, cannot but allow and prefer. Upon this foundation, and upon this only, morality stands firm, and may defy all competition. This makes it more than a name ; a substantial good, worth all our aims and endeavors ;— and thus the gospel of Jesus has delivered it to us.

II.

LET the constant recurrence to our observation of contrivance, design, and wisdom, in the works of nature, once fix upon our minds the belief of a God, and after that all is easy. In the counsels of a being possessed of the power and disposition which the Creator of the universe must possess, it is not improbable that there should be a future state ; it is not improbable that we should be acquainted with it. A future state rectifies everything ; because if moral agents be made, in the last event, happy or miserable, according to their conduct in the station, and under the circumstances in which they are placed, it seems not very material by the operation of what causes, according to what rules, or even, if you please to call it so, by what chance or caprice, these stations are assigned, or these circumstances determined. This hypothesis, therefore, solves all that objection to the divine care and goodness, which the promiscuous distribution of good and evil (I do not mean the doubtful advantages of riches and grandeur, but

in the unquestionable important distinctions of health and sickness, strength and infirmity, bodily ease and pain, mental alacrity and depression) is apt on so many occasions to create. This one truth changes the nature of things, gives order to confusion, makes the moral world of a piece with the natural.

Nevertheless, a higher degree of assurance than that to which it is possible to advance this, or any argument drawn from the light of nature, was necessary, especially to overcome the shock which the imagination and the senses receive from the effects and the appearances of death, and the obstruction which thence arises to the expectation of either a continued or future existence. This difficulty, although of a nature, no doubt, to act very forcibly, will be found, upon reflection, to reside more in our habits of apprehension than in the subject; and that the giving way to it, when we have any reasonable grounds for the contrary, is rather an indulging of imagination than anything else.

Thought is different from motion, perception from impact: the individuality of a mind is hardly consistent with the indivisibility of an extended substance; or its volition, that is, its power of originating motion, with the inertness which cleaves to every portion of matter which our observation or our experiments can reach. These distinctions lead us to an *immaterial* principle; at least, they do this: they so negative the mechanical properties of matter, in the constitution of a sentient,

still more of a rational being, that no argument drawn from these properties can be of any great weight in opposition to other reasons, when the question respects the changes of which such a nature is capable, or the manner in which these changes are effected. Whatever thought be, or whatever it depends upon, the regular experience of *sleep* makes one thing concerning it certain, that it can be completely suspended, and completely restored.

If any one find it too great a strain upon his thoughts to admit the notion of a substance strictly immaterial, that is, from which extension and solidity are excluded, he can find no difficulty in allowing that a particle as small as a particle of light, minuter than all conceivable dimensions, may just as easily be the depository, the organ, and the vehicle of consciousness, as the congeries of animal substance which forms a human body ; that being so, it may transfer a proper identity to whatever shall hereafter be united to it ; may be safe amidst the destruction of the integuments ; may connect the natural with the spiritual, the corruptible with the glorified body. If it be said that the mode and means of all this is imperceptible by our senses, it is only what is true of the most important agencies and operations. The great powers of nature are all invisible. Gravitation, electricity, magnetism, though constantly present, and constantly exerting their influence ; though within us, near us, and about us ; though diffused throughout all space,

overspreading the surface, or penetrating the contexture, of all bodies with which we are acquainted, depend upon substances and actions which are totally concealed from our senses. The Supreme Intelligence is so himself.

But whether these or any other attempts to satisfy the imagination bear any resemblance to truth, or whether the imagination, which is the mere slave of habit, can be satisfied or not ; when a future state and the revelation of a future state, is not only perfectly consistent with the attributes of the Being who governs the universe ; but when it is more—when it alone removes the appearance of contrariety which attends the operations of His will toward creatures capable of comparative merit and demerit, of reward and punishment ; when a strong body of historical evidence, confirmed by many internal tokens of truth and authenticity, gives us just reason to believe that such a revelation hath actually been made ; we ought to set our minds at rest, with the assurance that in the resources of creative wisdom expedients cannot be wanted to carry into effect what the Deity hath proposed : that either a new and mighty influence will descend upon the human world to resuscitate extinguished consciousness, or that amidst the other wonderful contrivances with which the universe abounds, and by some of which we see animal life, in many instances, assuming improved forms of existence, acquiring new organs, new perceptions. and new sources of enjoyments, provision is also made,

though by methods secret to us (as all the great processes of nature are), for conducting the object of God's moral government, through the necessary changes of their frame, to those final distinctions of happiness and misery, which he hath declared to be reserved for obedience and transgression, for virtue and vice, for the use and the neglect, the right and the wrong employment, of the faculties and opportunities with which he hath been pleased, severally, to instruct and to try us.

Death.

I.

DEATH is said to be the king of terrors. These words are usually misunderstood ; they are not, in Scripture, meant of a natural death, as *it* is only the separation of soul and body ; but must be understood of damnation, that eternal death, which is, most properly, though not emphatically enough, if words were to be found to heighten the expression, termed the king of terrors, as being the eternal separation of the soul from God, its everlasting exclusion from any portion of felicity : and it is evident it ought to be taken in this sense : for a man who has either led a virtuous or innocent life, or who, having done otherwise, truly and sin-

cerely repents, resolving upon a perfect and universal obedience to his God for the future ; who is conscious to himself of no wilful breach of his resolution, but continually begs pardon for such failings and infirmities as he cannot either discover or avoid ; who unfeignedly abhors those follies and vanities which he fancied so much pleasure in before, placing his greatest delight in love and obedience to God ; who looks upon his being as made for another world, not for this ; and who can, with the piercing eye of faith, cast frequent though imperfect glances thither, and make such discoveries of the glories of heaven as to inflame his soul with an earnest desire to enjoy them—such a one must needs behold death with a wishing eye ; it will appear to him no otherwise than as that which opens the door to his liberty and happiness, and lets him into those joys for which he has so greatly longed : he would behold death approaching with the same pleasure that a man cast upon a desert island would see a ship sailing to his relief ; he would run eagerly to the shore, and embark with delight.

II.

I have often thought upon death, and I find it the least of all evils. All that which is past is as a dream ; and he that hopes and depends upon time coming, dreams waking. So much of our life as we have discovered is already dead ; and all those hours which we

share, even from the breast of our mothers until we return to our grandmother the earth, are part of our dying days : whereof even this is one, and those that succeed are of the same nature ; for we die daily : and as others have given place to us, so we must in the end give way to others.

Physicians in the name of death include all sorrow, anguish, disease, calamity, or whatsoever can fall into the life of man, either grievous or unwelcome : but these things are familiar to us, and we suffer them every hour ; therefore we die daily, and I am older since I affirmed it.

Why should man be in love with his fetters, though of gold ? Art thou drowned in security ? Then, I say, thou art perfectly dead. For though thou movest, yet thy soul is buried within thee, and thy good angel either forsakes his guard or sleeps. There is nothing under heaven, saving a true friend, unto which my heart doth lean. And this dear freedom hath begotten me this peace, that I mourn not for that end which must be, nor spend one wish to have one minute added to the uncertain date of my years.

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Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark ; and as that natural fear in children is increased by tales, so is the other. Certainly the contemplation of death, as the wages of sin and passage to another world, is holy and religious ; but the fear of it, as a

tribute due unto nature, is weak. Yet in religious meditations there is sometimes a mixture of vanity and superstition.

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It is as natural to die as to be born ; and to a little infant perhaps the one is as painful as the other. He that dies in an earnest pursuit, is like one that is wounded in hot blood, who for the time scarce feels the hurt ; and therefore a mind fixed and bent upon somewhat that is good, doth avert the dolours of death : but above all, believe it, the sweetest canticle is Nunc Dimittis, when a man hath obtained worthy ends and expectations.

Early Death.

EARLY death which intercepts the fruits of a growing virtue, will not bereave the virtuous of any degree of that future glory to which such fruits would have entitled them ; it is rather to be inferred from the author of the Book of Wisdom, that having completed their perfection in a little time, they had in a little time finished their course ; and by what they did do gave such plain proofs of what they would do, that God rewards their purposes as he does the actions of others, and therefore hasteneth to take them to himself.

As God orders all the particular events of life to the good of those that love him, so much more must he dispose this great event that befalls mortal man to their interest and benefit ; and therefore this immature death is, doubtless, to the righteous, better than life, though we may not be able to discern why.

They die in their perfections, their glory yet unsullied, their felicity unstained ; no vile temptation, no misfortune having yet triumphed over them ; an advantage which we much admire, when we see great and good men surprised or overpowered by weakness and calamities : for then we cannot but acknowledge, that if death had come sooner, it had been much kinder ; for they had been gathered into the storehouse of the dead, like corn into the granary before unseasonable or immoderate rain had corrupted it, or any malignant vapors had blasted it.

We know not how Heaven has dealt with these its favorites : peradventure it is in the moral as in the political world, some are born to that greatness which others acquire with labor : he never dies too soon, who dies ripe and perfect : and if these divine souls came into the world enriched with more light and beauty, with more impetuous inclinations to virtue, than those of other men ; if their short life was so innocent, so bright, that out of a particular grace God thought fit to exempt them from the miseries of this life ; or that upon the account of a particular preëminence, they

needed not pass through the trial, the discipline, and purgations of it—on either of these supposals, we ought not to commiserate, but revere their fate.

Advantage of the Uncertainty of Death.

It seems to be expedient that the period of human life should be *uncertain*. Did mortality follow any fixed rule, it would produce a security in those that were at a distance from it, which would lead to the greatest disorders; and a horror in those who approached it, similar to that which a condemned prisoner feels on the night before execution. But, that death be uncertain, the young must sometimes die as well as the old. Also were deaths never *sudden*, they who are in health would be too confident of life. The strong and the active, who want most to be warned and checked, would live without apprehension or restraint. On the other hand, were sudden deaths very frequent, the sense of constant jeopardy would interfere too much with the degree of ease and enjoyment intended for us; and human life be too precarious for the business and interests which belong to it. There could not be dependence either upon our own lives, or the lives of those with whom we were connected, sufficient to carry on

the regular offices of human society. The manner, therefore, in which death is made to occur, conduces to the purposes of admonition, without overthrowing the necessary stability of human affairs.

The Fear of Death.

WOULD any of you be cured of that common disease, the fear of death? Yet this is not the right name of the disease, as a mere reference to our armies and navies is sufficient to prove: nor can the fear of death, either as loss of life or pain of dying, be justly held a common disease. But would you be cured of the fear and fearful questionings connected with the approach of death? Look this way, and you shall find more than you seek. Christ, the Word that was from the beginning, and was made flesh and dwelt among men, died. And he, who dying conquered death in his own person, conquered sin and death, which is the wages of sin, for thee. And of this thou mayest be assured, if only thou believe in him and love him. I need not add, keep his commandments: since where faith and love are, obedience in its threefold character as effect, reward, and criterion, follows by that moral necessity which is the highest form of freedom. The grave is thy bed of rest, and no longer

the cold bed : for thy Saviour has warmed it, and made it fragrant.

If then it be health and comfort to the faithful that Christ descended into the grave, with especial confidence may we meditate on his return from thence, *quickened by the spirit* : this being to those who are in Him the certain pledge, yea, the effectual cause of that blessed resurrection for which they themselves hope. There is that union betwixt them and their Redeemer, that they shall rise by the communication and virtue of his rising : not simply by his power—for so the wicked likewise to their grief shall be raised : but *they by his life as their life*.

Grief for the Loss of Friends.

As to our grief for the loss of friends, all that can be said of it is this, that there is a strong propensity in human nature to lament the loss of any person, or anything that is agreeable to us, and contributes to our satisfaction ; and that it is very difficult to derive a sufficient power from reason to oppose its efforts. A man must not pretend, therefore, to claim an exemption from grief for the loss of his friend, who does not make it appear, from the rest of the actions of his life,

that he uses his utmost endeavors to govern himself entirely by reason ; to subdue his passions, and to get the mastery over pleasure, as well as over grief : otherwise, his not grieving will be in evidence rather of his ill-nature, than of his philosophy and religion. And that man who conforms his life and behavior to the usual methods and customs of the generality of mankind in other things, ought likewise to do it in this ; since it is reasonable to imagine that his thoughts in the main resemble theirs : and death, according to the common notion of mankind, being looked upon as the greatest evil, it were the highest pitch of ill-nature in a man that thinks it so, not to lament when it happens to his friend. But he who has established in his mind a firm belief that death is no evil : but, on the contrary, esteems it to be only the passage to perfect felicity, may justly be allowed to have the same sentiments of it in relation to his friend as he would have in regard to himself. But there is another affection of the soul, which has a very close connection with grief, and which is inseparable from it ; and that is love. For it is plain we grieve because we love either ourselves or something else. And since grief is generally both impious and unreasonable, as deviating from that perfect obedience and resignation which we owe to God, and therefore is not allowable in a wise and virtuous man, who makes it his endeavor to know and perform his duty with the utmost exactness he is able, it follows

there are other marks and demonstrations a wise and virtuous man can give of his love. For, if grief be the only mark of his love to his friend which a man is able to give, let him have as sorrowful a heart as he pleases, his friendship is of little account. The true properties of valuable friendship are, to desire to have done, and to endeavor to do, all imaginable good to those we love ; to assist and comfort them, as far as we are able, while they are in a capacity of being assisted and comforted by us ; to contribute with all our power and skill to their satisfaction and happiness ; to be as covetous of their advantage as of our own ; and, when any disaster or unhappy accident of any kind befalls them, to tax all the faculties of our souls to procure their relief. But for lamentation, when a friend is no longer in a situation to receive or to need the marks of our affection, it is neither beneficial nor reasonable, either in respect of our friend or of ourselves ; though the world, whose love generally flows only from their tongues and eyes, may think tears and complaints decent things. And thus they would make an easy amends by hypocrisy for their want of real friendship.

Reflections Concerning Life and Death.

WE will not find any one's life without sorrow, nor again without its share of pleasure; for our nature would not have been equal to it. But if one joys more, and another grieves more, this is due to the person himself that grieves being mean of soul, not to the nature of the case. For if we would rejoice continually we have many means thereto. Had we once laid hold on virtue, there would be nothing to grieve us any more. For she suggests good hopes to them that possess her, and makes them well pleasing to God, and approved among men, and infuses unspeakable delight. Yea, though in doing right virtue hath toil, yet doth it fill the conscience with much gladness, and lays up within so great pleasure, as no speech shall be able to express.

For which of the things in our present life seems to thee pleasant? A sumptuous table, and health of body, and glory, and wealth? Nay, these delights, if thou set them by that pleasure, will prove the bitterest of all things, compared thereunto. For nothing is more pleasurable than a sound conscience and a good hope. And if ye would learn this, let us inquire of him who is on the point of departing hence, or of him that is grown old; and when we have reminded him of sump-

tuous banqueting which he hath enjoyed, and of glory and honor, and of good works which he hath some time practised and wrought, let us ask in which he exults more ; and we shall see him for the other ashamed, and covering his face, but for these soaring and leaping for joy.

Hezekiah, when he was sick, called not to mind sumptuous feasting, nor glory, nor royalty, but righteousness. For “remember,” saith he, “how I walked before Thee in an upright way.” See St. Paul again for these things leaping with joy, and saying, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” “Why, what had he to speak of besides?” one may say. Many things, and more than these ; even the honors wherewith he was honored, what attendance and great respect he had enjoyed. But none of these things doth he bring forward, but his labors, and perils, and his crowns in requital for them ; and with much reason. For while the one sort are left here, the other migrate with us ; and for those we shall give account, but for these we shall ask reward.

Know ye not in the day of death how sins make the soul shrink ? how they stir up the heart from beneath ? At that time, therefore, when such things are happening, the remembrance of good works stands by us,* like

* “Dr. Hales, rector of Killasandra, in Ireland, happened to tell John Wesley, that when Bishop Chevenix (of Waterford), in his old age, was

a calm in a storm, and comforts the perturbed soul. For if we be wakeful, even during our life this fear will be ever present with us; but, insensible as we are, it will surely come upon us when we are cast out from hence. Because the prisoner too is then most grieved, when they are leading him out to the court; then most trembles, when he is near the judgment seat, when he must give his account. For the same kind of reason, may be, they are heard relating horrors and fearful visions, the sight whereof they that are departing may not endure, but often shake their very bed with much vehemence, and gaze fearfully on the bystanders, the soul urging itself inward, unwilling to be torn away from the body, and not enduring the sight of the coming angels threatening, and stern Powers among our visitors; what shall we not suffer, the soul being forced from the body, and dragged away, and bewailing much, all in vain? Since that rich man too, after his departure, mourned much, but derived no profit therefrom. All these things then let us picture to ourselves, and consider, lest we

congratulated on recovering from a fever, the bishop replied, 'I believe I am not long for this world. I have lost all relish for what formerly gave me pleasure; even my books no longer entertain me. There is nothing sticks by me but the recollection of what little good I may have done.' One of Wesley's preachers, who was present, exclaimed at this, 'Oh the vain man, boasting of his good works!' Dr. Hales vindicated the good old bishop, and Wesley silenced the preacher by saying, 'Yes, Dr. Hales is right: there is indeed great comfort in the calm remembrance of a life well spent.'—SOUTHEY'S LIFE OF WESLEY.

too suffer the same, and thus let us keep the fear thence arising in vigor ; that we may escape the actual punishment, and attain unto the eternal blessings.

The Account Hereafter.

THAT “painful apprehension of the account” hereafter, is surely the happiest feeling that can spring up in the human bosom, if it be only followed up and improved as it should be. But how is it to be improved ? is surely as important a question as can be propounded in this world. My fixed persuasion, after years of solicitous consideration, is this :—We never can soften this apprehension into cheerful hope merely by being more vigilant over our actions, or becoming more actively beneficent : these are indispensable as adjuncts ; but they will not heal a wounded spirit, or lead alone to a steady peace of mind : indeed, however they may tell in a man’s favor, in view of the merciful and indulgent Father of our spirits, I believe they have no direct efficacy to settle the mind in comfort. Religion strictly so called, and to us the religion of the Gospel, will alone be adequate for this inward effect. By religion, I mean a steady choice of, and affectionate adherence to, God, as the paramount object of our hearts, and the supreme sum and centre of our happiness ; and by the religion

of the Gospel, I mean the same great end pursued under those more familiarizing, yet more elevating views, and with adequate knowledge of, and cordial relish for, those multiplied and invaluable aids which the grand and gracious system of "God manifest in the flesh" implies. Many have a disposition to do good, but have not "holy desires"; far be it from me to depreciate a disposition to do good, yet we must remember that this might, abstractedly, and as it respects temporal good only, be consistent with atheism; but "holy desires" have direct and immediate reference to the Father of spirits, and are the first motions of the true and real life of our souls. In having these, therefore, as compared with others, we may be considered singularly happy; and it is in the growth of these that both our safety and comfort will consist. These are religion in its bud; and in proportion as these develop themselves and become the ruling principle in the mind, will all right and happy feelings and habits increase and multiply.

Of all means of cherishing these, private prayer I take to be the chief; and I am sure it is right to cultivate it even in spite of coldness; for coldness may be overcome by continued exercise, as God will surely bless persevering endeavor; and when once it is overcome, and an habitual warmth of devotion induced, then, as the Psalmist says, "Ah! well is thee, and happy shalt thou be."

This impregnation of divine grace will lead us to seek a sensible inward change ; not sensible as to the moment, or hour, or day of commencement, but sensible in alteration of state and feeling ; and cause us to rise in our private walk, above forms and observances, and to seek an efficient internal sense of Divine things, adequate to the subduing of ungodliness and worldly desires, and to the real production and maintenance of predominant spirituality of mind. This really renovated frame, I am confident, is that which the New Testament is full of ; which is there called the new creation or creature, the spirit of adoption, the life hid with Christ in God, &c., &c., &c.

I conclude with adding a passage from a letter of a friend, which I consider a specimen of genuine, simple Christian piety. It has something of the puritanic spirit, without an atom of disgusting shibboleth. He had been speaking of some deceased good men, and then proceeds :—

“ Well, my dear sir, I trust we are following these good men, who are safely arrived in heaven ; and, though the sea divides *us*, I am often shaking hands with you. Let us hold on our way, and we shall grow stronger and stronger. Religion never appeared of greater importance to me than at present ; and I bless God, I feel the comforts and consolations of it. I am enabled to overcome some difficulties, which I thought I should never have surmounted ; and by the help of

my God, I trust I shall leap over every wall. I would live the life of, and maintain a constant nearness to heaven ; be dead to this world as much as possible, and have my conversation in a better. But I see, daily and hourly, need of circumspection and care, of prayer, and mortifying my corruptions. But I do get better ; and to be conformed to the image of my Saviour, is my great and humble ambition. In Him is all my trust, and on Him alone I rely for every blessing, temporal and eternal." I take this to be Christianity !

Dying Ecstasies.

WHAT must the next world be to those who have not thought of it ! (though the matter of personal responsibility is known only to God and his holy angels.) But, indeed, what must it be, even to those who have thought of it most ! " For we see now through a glass darkly." The solid satisfaction is (a matter, happily, not merely of faith, but of knowledge, if we duly use our advantages), love never fails. We, therefore, may anticipate the substance, though we can form no conception of the circumstantial alteration, and we may hope advancement.

A brilliant dying scene is, doubtless, an anodyne to the

hearts which are lacerated by the privation, and which may need something palpable to inspire comfort. But though ebullitions of delight at that moment when human nature, left to itself, would be most desolate, are impressive and interesting, I am so much attached to sobriety, that I think I should derive more pleasure from seeing a dying person completely and deeply at ease, than from seeing one joyous.

Ecstasies at a dying hour are a very precarious evidence of preparation for future happiness.

It might be shown, from the nature of the human mind, that ecstasies may be produced by fallacious means, and on the most deceptive grounds. Folly and vice have had their martyrs, who have often shown fortitude worthy of a better cause: and it is not impossible that instances of this nature may have sometimes risen to ecstasy. Enthusiasm, assisted by opium, used often to make Turkish soldiers ecstatic on the field of battle. In short, there is enough to prove that nothing but moral love of the moral God is a test of rectitude, or a pledge of safety. They who rejoice in a persuasion that pardon of sins, or certainty of future bliss, has been made known to them by some Divine communication, though in this instance mistaken, may still have that moral love, and if so, a mixture of erroneous delight will not affect their more solid ground of hope. But the sure bottom is much better seen through the still water. True religious joy is—

“A sacred and homefelt delight,
A sober certainty of waking bliss.”

To feel this, is the privilege of the dying Christian : and it ought to be his daily care to provide this cordial for his last hour. But this happy state of mind can only arise from conscious ascendancy of Divine love in the heart ; which, by having conquered the world, the flesh, and the devil, demonstrates whence it has come, and whither it must return. He only, in a word, who has found God his refuge from the power of sin, can be sure that God is his support against the fear of death.

PART VII.

“WE must know the truth, in order that the truth may make us free. Certain it is, that no researches, no requirements, will quicken a dead soul: one might as well think of making a fire, without anything to kindle it, by merely putting fuel together in a heap. But it is no less true, that as a fire when kindled must be sustained by fuel, and its warmth and brightness will be in proportion to the quality of the matter by which it is fed, just so must the flame of devotion, when once kindled from heaven, be sustained and cherished by our own industrious and wise acquirements of heavenly truth; and it will be truth to us,—not merely in proportion to its intrinsic excellence and appositeness, but also in proportion to the solid certainty with which we embrace it.”—ALEXANDER KNOX.

PART VII.



The Sacred Scriptures.

I.

THE Bible loses much by not being considered as a system. For though many other books are comparable to cloth, in which, by a small pattern, we may safely judge of the whole piece; yet the Bible is like a fair suit of arras, of which though a shred may assure you of the fineness of the colors, and richness of the stuff, yet the hangings never appear to their true advantage but when they are displayed to their full dimensions, and seen together.

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. . . As mineralists observe that rich mines are wont to lie hid in those grounds whose surface bears no fruit trees, nor is well stored with useful plants or verdure, so divers passages of Holy Writ, which appear

barren and unpromising to our first survey, and hold not obviously forth instructions or promises, being by a sedulous artist searched into, afford, out of their penetrated bowels, rich and precious mysteries of divinity.

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You will not do right, either to THEOLOGY, or to the greatest repository of all its truths, the BIBLE, if you imagine that there are no considerable additions to be made to the theological discoveries we have already; nor no clearer exposition of many texts of Scripture; nor better reflections on that matchless book, than are to be met with in the generality of commentators, or of preachers, without excepting the ancient fathers themselves.

. . . I meet with much fewer than I could wish, who make it their business to search the Scriptures for these things,—such as unheeded prophecies, overlooked mysteries, and strange harmonies,—which being clearly and judiciously proposed, may make that book appear worthy of the high extraction it challenges, and, consequently, of the veneration of considering men,—and who are solicitous to discern and make out, in the way of governing and saving man revealed by God, so excellent an economy and such deep contrivances, and wise dispensations, as may bring credit to religion: not so much as it is ROMAN, or PROTESTANT, or SOCINIAN, but, as it is CHRISTIAN. But these good affections, for the

repute of religion in general, are to be assisted by a deep judgment. For men that want either that, or a good stock of critical learning, may easily overlook the best observations, which usually are not obvious; or propose as mysteries things that are either not grounded or not weighty enough: and so, notwithstanding their good meaning, may bring disparagement upon what they desire to recommend.

II.

I am confident that the New Testament, rightly understood, would harmonize all dissonances, and bring the Christian Church, not only “with one heart,” but “with one mouth,” to glorify God: and the more I read and endeavor to study it in its own incomparable language, the more I am satisfied that there is an organic scheme of truth running through every part of it, which it will be yet granted to faithful Christians to enter into and become possessed, and thereby to attain not only “the unity of the faith,” but also the unity “of the knowledge” of the Son of God.

In nothing are the wisdom and goodness of God so peculiarly manifested as in the attractive qualities of the Sacred writings; the more we study the more we are necessarily drawn to love them. But the great attraction lies in this, that throughout the Scripture there

is a divine magnetism fitted by the Author of all things to all the deepest sensibilities of the human heart. There is in every part of it where instruction is intended, a certain divine influence, which induces serious thought, enkindles holy desire, inspires good resolutions. It places everywhere before us that which our hearts tell us is "the one thing needful," and while it instructs us in principles, it draws us by examples. But its grand energy is the view it gives us of a Redeemer. It is in Him we are to find the central light, where all the rays converge. For "it is He," as the Apostle says, "who is made of God unto us, wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

III.

The best way for understanding the Scriptures, is to read it assiduously and diligently, and, if it can be, in the original. I do not mean, to read every day some certain number of chapters, as is usual with some, but to read it so as to study and consider, and not to leave it till you are satisfied that you have got the true meaning.

I read the word of God without prepossession or bias, and come to it with a resolution to take my sense from it, and not with the design to bring it to the sense of my system. How much that has made men wind and twist and pull the text in all the several sects of Christians, I need not tell you. I desire to take my

religion from the Scriptures, and then whether it suits or suits not any other denomination, I am not much concerned; for I think at the last day it will not be inquired whether I were of the Church of England, or the Church of Rome, but whether I sought and embraced the truth in the love of it.

IV.

It seems to me to be evident that the Church is not, as yet, arrived to that perfection in understanding the Scripture, which we can imagine is the highest that God ever intended the Church should come to. . . .

It is an argument with me, that the world is not yet very near its end, that the Church has made no greater progress in understanding the mysteries of the Scriptures. The Scriptures, in all their parts, were made for the use of the Church here on earth: and it seems reasonable to suppose that God will, by degrees, unveil their meaning to his Church. It was made mysterious, in many places having great difficulties, that his people might have *exercise* for their *pious wisdom and study*; and that his Church might make progress in the understanding of it, as the philosophical world makes progress in the understanding of the book of nature, and in the unfolding of its mysteries. A DIVINE WISDOM appears in ordering it thus. How much better is it to have

divine truth and light break forth in this way, than it would have been to have had it shine at once to every one, without any labor or industry of the understanding! It would be less delightful, and less prized and admired, and would have had vastly less influence on men's hearts, and would have been less to the glory of God.

V.

It was on God's holy word that our Hookers, Donnes, Andrewses preached; it was Scripture bread that they divided, according to the needs and seasons. The preacher of our days expounds, or appears to expound, his own sentiments and conclusions, and thinks himself evangelic enough if he can make the Scriptures seem in conformity with them.

Above all, there is something to my mind at once elevating and soothing in the idea of an order of learned men reading the many works of the wise and great, in many languages, for the purpose of making one book contain the life and virtue of all others, for their brethren's use who have but that one to read. What, then, if that one book be such, that the increase of learning is shown by more and more enabling the mind to find them all in it! But such, according to my experience, the Bible is, as far as all moral, spiritual, and prudential—all private, domestic, yea, even political,

truths and interests are concerned. The astronomer, chemist, mineralogist must go elsewhere ; but the Bible is the book for man.

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When we reflect how large a part of our present knowledge and civilization is owing, directly or indirectly, to the Bible ; when we are compelled to admit, as a fact of history, that the Bible has been the main lever by which the moral and intellectual character of Europe has been raised to its present comparative height, we should be struck, methinks, by the marked and prominent difference of this book from the works which it is now the fashion to quote as guides and authorities in morals, politics, and history. In the Bible every agent appears and acts as a self-subsisting individual ; each has a life of its own, and yet all are one life. The elements of necessity and free-will are reconciled in the higher power of an omnipresent Providence, that predestinates the whole in the moral freedom of the integral parts. Of this the Bible never suffers us to lose sight. The root is never detached from the ground. It is God everywhere : and all creatures conform to his decrees, the righteous by performance of the law, the disobedient by the sufferance of the penalty.

It is highly worthy of observation that the inspired

writings received by Christians are distinguishable from all other books pretending to inspiration, from the scriptures of the Brahmins, and even from the Koran, in their strong and frequent recommendations of truth. I do not here mean veracity, which cannot but be enforced in every code which appeals to the religious principle of man ; but knowledge. This is not only extolled as the crown and honor of a man, but to seek after it is again and again commanded us as one of our most sacred duties. Yea, the very perfection and final bliss of the glorified spirit are represented by the Apostle as a plain aspect or intuitive beholding of truth in its eternal and immutable source. Not that knowledge can of itself do all. The light of religion is not that of the moon, light without heat ; but neither is its warmth that of the stove, warmth without light. Religion is the sun whose warmth indeed swells, and stirs, and actuates the life of nature, but who at the same time beholds all the growth of life with a master-eye, makes all objects glorious on which he looks, and by that glory visible to others.
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Never yet did there exist a full faith in the Divine Word which did not expand the intellect, while it purified the heart ;—which did not multiply the aims and objects of the understanding, while it fixed and simplified those of the desires and passions.
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It is worthy of special observation that the Scriptures are distinguished from all other writings pretending to inspiration, by the strong and frequent recommendations of knowledge, and a spirit of inquiry. Without reflection, it is evident that neither the one can be acquired nor the other exercised. . . .

I can truly affirm of myself, that my studies have been profitable and availing to me only so far as I have endeavored to use all my other knowledge as a glass enabling me to receive more light in a wider field of vision from the word of God.

VI.

Not eloquence, but truth, is to be sought for in the holy Scriptures, every part of which must be read with the same spirit by which it was written. In these, and all other books, it is improvement in holiness, not pleasure in the subtilty of thought, or the accuracy of expression, that must be principally regarded. We ought to read those parts that are simple and devout with the same affection and delight as those of high speculation, or profound erudition. Whatever book thou readest, suffer not thy mind to be influenced by the character of the writer, whether his literary accomplishments be great or small. Let thy only motive to read be the love of truth; and, instead of inquiring

who it is that writes, give all thy attention to the nature of what is written. Men pass away like the shadows of the morning; but "the word of the Lord endureth forever:" and that word, without respect of persons, in ways infinitely various, speaketh unto all.

The profitable reading of the holy Scriptures is frequently interrupted by a vain curiosity which prompts us to examine, discuss, and labor to comprehend those parts that should be meekly and submissively passed over. But to derive spiritual improvement from reading, we must read with humility, simplicity, and faith; and not affect the reputation of profound learning.

Partial Manifestations.

IT was the purpose of God to redeem mankind and to open the way of salvation to those who should seek it. But men have rendered themselves so unworthy of it, that He justly denies to some, on account of their obduracy, that unmerited mercy which He grants to others. If He thought fit to surmount the obstinacy of the most hardened, He could easily effect it, by revealing Himself so manifestly to them as to make it impossible for them to doubt the reality of His existence. And thus He will appear at the last day in awful

thunder, and such a wreck of nature, that the most blind shall be forced to behold Him.

But this was not the way in which He chose to appear at His milder coming. Because, there being so many among mankind who were rendering themselves unworthy of His compassion, He determined to leave them destitute of a blessing which they did not desire. It was not, therefore, consistent that He should appear in a manner manifestly divine, and capable of convincing all men irresistibly: nor, on the other hand, would it have been right to have been so perfectly concealed as not to be discoverable by those who sought Him sincerely. His design was to render Himself perfectly knowable to the latter; and thus intending to reveal Himself to those who sought Him with their whole heart, and to conceal Himself from those who shunned Him with their whole heart,—He so tempered the knowledge of Himself as to give marks that were visible to those who sought Him, and obscure to those who sought Him not.

There is light enough for those whose sincere desire is to see; and darkness enough for those who are of a contrary disposition.

There is brightness enough to illuminate the elect; and enough of obscurity to humble them.

There is obscurity enough to blind the reprobate; and brightness enough to condemn them, and to leave them without excuse.

If the world subsisted merely to inform men of the being of God, His divinity would shine through it on every side in an undeniable manner. But as it subsists only by Jesus Christ, and for Jesus Christ, and to inform men of their corruption and redemption, everything beams forth with evidence of these important facts. For all that we can behold neither denotes the total exclusion nor the manifest presence of God, but the presence of a God who hideth Himself. Everything bears this character.

If nothing of God had ever appeared, this continual privation would have been equivocal; and might have been equally explained by the non-existence of a Deity, and by the unworthiness of mankind to know anything of Him. But as He in some instances appears, though not continually,—this takes away the ambiguity. If He has appeared once, He exists forever. So that we can come to no other conclusion than this, that there is a God, and that men are unworthy to know Him.

The divine intention is more to produce a perfection of the will than of the understanding; but a perfect clearness would only be of use to the understanding, and would be hurtful to the will.

If there were no darkness, men would not feel their depravity; and were there no light, they would have no hope of a remedy. So that it is not only just, but advantageous to us, that God should conceal Himself

in part ; since it is equally dangerous for men to know God without knowing their own misery, and to know their own misery without any knowledge of God.

Everything informs man of his own condition ; but this ought to be rightly understood. For God does not either completely reveal Himself, nor remain altogether concealed. But it is most certainly true that He conceals Himself from those who tempt Him, and reveals Himself to those who seek Him. For though men are altogether unworthy of God, yet at the same time they are capable of enjoying Him. They are unworthy of communion with Him by their corruption, but are capable of it by their original nature.

There is no object on earth which does not proclaim either the misery of man, or the mercy of God ; either the impotence of man without God, or the power of man with the assistance of God.

The whole universe teaches man, either that he is depraved, or that he is redeemed. Everything informs him either of his greatness or his misery. The dereliction of God we may remark in the Pagans : His protection appears in the Jews.

All things work together for good to the elect, them that love God ; even the obscurities of Scripture, which they revere on account of that divine clearness which they understand. And all things work together for evil to the reprobate, them that hate God, not excepting the divine clearness of Scripture which they blas-

pheme, on account of the obscurities which they do not comprehend.

If Jesus Christ had only come for the purpose of sanctification, the whole of Scripture, and everything else, would have been directed to this end ; and it would have been very easy to convince unbelievers. But since he came, as Isaiah speaks, both “for a sanctuary and a rock of offence,” it is impossible for us to conquer their perverseness. But this makes nothing against us, because we affirm that all the divine conduct conveys no conviction to obstinate minds, and such as do not sincerely seek the truth.

Jesus Christ is come, “that those who see not may see ; and those who see may be made blind.” He is come to heal the sick, and let the healthy die : to “call sinners to repentance” and justification, and to leave those in their sins who think themselves righteous ; to “fill the hungry with good things, and to send the rich empty away.”

What do the prophets affirm of Jesus Christ ? That he shall appear evidently to be God ? No ; but that He is God veiled to the eye of sense ; that He shall be unknown ; that men will not think it is He ; that He shall be “a stone of stumbling, against which many shall fall,” &c.

It was to make the Messiah known to the good, and unknown to the wicked, that God caused Him to be so foretold. For had the manner of His appearance been

clearly described, there would not have been any obscurity even to wicked men. And if the time had been obscurely predicted, even good men would have felt themselves in darkness. For the integrity of their heart could not have taught them, for example, that a $\square$ signified six hundred years. The time, therefore, was clearly declared ; and the manner only in figure.

By this means the wicked, apprehending that the blessings promised were temporal, were deceived, notwithstanding the clear predictions of the time ; while the righteous were not deceived ; for the sense in which the promised blessings are understood, depends on the heart, which calls that good which it loves ; but the interpretation of the promised time does not depend on the heart. And thus the clear prediction of the time, and the obscure prediction of the blessings, could mislead none but the wicked.

What must the Messiah have been, seeing that in Him the sceptre was eternally to continue with Judah ; and that, at His coming, the sceptre was to be taken from Judah ? “ That seeing, they should not see ; and understanding, they should not understand.” Nothing could have been more complete.

Instead of complaining that God is concealed, we ought to give Him thanks that He has so clearly revealed Himself ; and to give Him thanks also, that He still hides Himself from the wise and the proud, who are unworthy to know so holy a God.

The genealogy of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament is intermixed with so many things of little consequence, that we can scarcely distinguish it. Had Moses kept no other register but that of the ancestors of Jesus Christ, it would have been too conspicuous ; but even now, by careful inspection, we may trace it in Thamar, Ruth, &c.

The most apparent defects are of force with persons of discernment. For instance : the two genealogies of St. Matthew and St. Luke ; it being manifest that they could not have been drawn out in concert.

Let not men, therefore, reproach us with want of light : for we ourselves profess to want it. But let them own the truth of religion in its very obscurity, in the imperfections of the light which surrounds us, and that indifference which is in men about knowing it.

Were there but one religion, God would be too conspicuous : and so likewise if there were martyrs in no other religion than our own.

Jesus Christ, to leave the impious in their blindness, never told them that he was not of Nazareth, or that he was not the son of Joseph.

As Jesus Christ remained unknown amongst men, so truth remains amongst other opinions, undistinguished by their external appearance.

If the mercy of God be so great as savingly to instruct us, even while He hides Himself from us, what light may we not expect, when He shall please to unveil His perfections ?

We can understand nothing of the works of God, if we do not take it as a principle, that He blinds some while He illuminates others.

Proofs of Religion.

THE prophecies, nay, even the miracles, and the other proofs of our religion, are not such as can be called geometrically demonstrative. But I only want you now to admit, that it is not acting contrary to reason to believe them. They possess both clearness and obscurity, to illuminate some, and to confuse others. But the clearness is such as surpasses, or at least equals, the clearest things that can be brought against them; inasmuch that it is not reason that can determine men not to regard them: on the contrary, it can only be concupiscence and depravity of heart. So that there is sufficient evidence to condemn those who refuse to believe, if there be not sufficient to overcome them. And hence it will appear, that in those who were guided by the gospel, it is grace and not reason that makes them follow it; and in those who slight it, it is concupiscence and not reason that makes them reject it.

Who can do otherwise than admire and embrace a religion which thoroughly knows those truths, which the more we know, the more we shall be obliged to acknowledge?

Evidences of Christian Truth.

THE ungodly, who abandon themselves blindly to their passions, without either knowing God or giving themselves the trouble to seek Him, verify in themselves this one principle of the faith which they oppose, that human nature is in a state of corruption. And the Jews, who obstinately withstand the Christian religion, verify in like manner this other principle of the same faith, which they oppose—namely, that Jesus Christ is the true Messiah, and that He came to redeem mankind, and to rescue them from the misery and corruption into which they were fallen. And this they do as well by the state in which we see them at present, and which was foretold in the prophecies, as by the prophecies themselves, which are still in their hands, and which they inviolably preserve, as containing the marks by which the Messiah is to be known. Thus the evidences of the depravity of men, and of redemption by Jesus Christ, which are the two principal truths which Christianity establishes, may be deduced from the wicked, who live in indifference about religion, and from the Jews who are its irreconcilable enemies.

Ancient Philosophy and Christianity.

By undeceiving, enlarging, and informing the intellect, Philosophy sought to purify and to elevate the moral character. Of course, those alone could receive the latter and incomparably greater benefit, who by natural capacity and favorable contingencies of fortune were fit recipients of the former. How small the number, we scarcely need the evidence of history to assure us. Across the night of Paganism, Philosophy flitted on, like the lantern-fly of the Tropics, a light to itself, and an ornament, but alas! no more than an ornament, of the surrounding darkness.

Christianity reversed the order. By means accessible to all, by inducements operative on all, and by convictions, the grounds and materials of which all men might find in themselves, her first step was to cleanse the heart. But the benefit did not stop here. In preventing the rank vapors that steam up from the corrupt heart, Christianity restores the intellect likewise to its natural clearness. By relieving the mind from the distractions and importunities of the unruly passions, she improves the quality of the understanding: while at the same time she presents for its contemplations objects so great and so bright as cannot but enlarge the organ by which they are contemplated. The fears, the hopes, the remembrances, the anticipations,

the inward and outward experience, the belief and the faith, of a Christian, form of themselves a philosophy and a sum of knowledge, which a life spent in the Grove of Academus, or the painted Porch, could not have attained or collected. The result is contained in the fact of a wide and still widening Christendom.

Yet I dare not say that the effects have been proportionate to the divine wisdom of the scheme. Too soon did the Doctors of the Church forget that the heart, the moral nature, was the beginning and the end; and that truth, knowledge, and insight were comprehended in its expansion. This was the true and first apostasy—when in council and synod the divine humanities of the Gospel gave way to speculative systems, and religion became a science of shadows under the name of theology, or at best a bare skeleton of truth, without life or interest, alike inaccessible and unintelligible to the majority of Christians. For these therefore there remained only rites and ceremonies and spectacles, shows and semblances. Thus among the learned *the* substance of things hoped for, passed off into notions; and for the unlearned the surfaces of things became substance. The Christian world was for centuries divided into the many, that did not think at all, and the few who did nothing but think—both alike unreflecting, the one from the defect of the act, the other from the absence of an object.

Religious Controversy.

THE church of CHRIST is separated from infidels, by holding truth in opposition to falsehood. But the members of CHRIST are severed from each other generally by holding distinct truths exclusively; and by thus placing in opposition those truths they should hold in combination. Thus has it been with the grand principles of Divine grace, which honors God, our sovereign benefactor; and of free will, which glorifies God, our impartial judge. Concluding that, if the one of these great truths were admitted, the other must be combated, the bulk of the professing world has continually been vibrating between the alternate extremes of antinomian fatalism and pharisaic self-righteousness. And whilst each party has reaped the benefit of the truth it held, each has suffered from the equally important one it unadvisedly rejected. From the times of the Pharisees and Sadducees, the Pelagians and Augustinians, the Jesuits and Jansenists, to the Arminians and Calvinists of the present day, the evils of such discussions have been sufficiently manifest. Whilst the true Christian deplores the mischief these controversies have occasioned to the speculative controvertists on either side, he rejoices to see the most eminently pious, on both sides, led by the grace of God to receive in their hearts even those very truths which

formed the stumbling block to their understanding. Who that has chosen that more excellent way of love the apostle speaks of, will not join in saying, with St. Austin in his epistles, "*Si non est gratia, quomodo salvat mundum? Si non est liberum arbitrium, quomodo judicat mundum?*" "If there be not free grace, how does God save the world? If there be not free will, how can God judge the world?"

When points terminating in speculation divide Christians, the Church may well mourn. To all such, controversies are dangerous. On merely carnal professors, they operate as a blind, veiling from their own mind the real motives which induce them to attack their more spiritual brethren. Whilst the mind is occupied in combating speculative opinions of good men, the heart which instigated the attack is often set on by a lurking enmity against the piety connected with them. The corruption of the carnal heart is really kindled against Divine truth. Its blows are, in reality, aimed against her, whilst it screens itself under the specious pretence of attacking the extraneous opinions casually connected with her. The word of God itself cannot be broken. It is only when good men unwarily connect their own speculations with revealed truth, that they present a point vulnerable to the attacks of their adversaries. Nor is controversy perhaps less dangerous to the truly pious. With them it is but too apt to prove a snare. They forget the comparative im-

portance of primary truths, whilst their strength is expended in maintaining opinions alike doubtful and unimportant. It is lamentable to employ the arms with which men should combat for Christ, in fruitless contentions against their brethren; in controversies, vain as they regard truth, but fatal as they respect love. How often have theological disputations, on non-essential points, proved the breach of the Church, and the stronghold of infidelity.*

Harmony of Divine Truth.

THERE is one good rule which we should keep always in view—namely, that what is unequivocally said, in any one part of the New Testament, cannot possibly be elsewhere contradicted. The fact of Divine goodness to all, without the shadow of a shade of doubt, can never be disputed, consistently with right reason, or

* We are mightily mistaken if we imagine that the points for which men of different opinions contend so eagerly here below, are of that concern to the Blessed above which they seem to us. In those happy regions, where perfect peace and concord, holiness and zeal for God's glory reign, there is more joy at the conversion of one sinner, more praise for the pious labor of one little tract, which makes men good livers, than for the winning proselytes to this or that Communion (as distinct from the rest, that disagree with it in less substantial niceties), than for vast volumes of subtle disputants, which make for the interest of any of those factions into which Christendom is so unfortunately divided.—DEAN STANHOPE.

due regard to Him who, in that declaration, as well as in so many other instances, has given us the happy assurance that, in God, we have not an inexorable Judge, but an infinitely gracious Father.

There is another matter which is of not less vital consequence—namely, that we must believe nothing which is inconsistent with the co-essential Deity of the Son. Whatever, therefore, our Saviour did for us, to facilitate our approach to God, must be considered as done with the same reference to his own Divine nature, as to that of the Father. And consequently we must understand the great work of redemption, as not less a redeeming of us to Himself than to his Heavenly Father. This is the doctrine laid down by St. Paul, in that beautiful passage, Titus ii. 12–14: “And to purify to himself a peculiar people.”

Besides, He, especially, it is who is King of the Church and the world, and who will be the Judge of both. Whatever, therefore, there is of severity in the Gospel system, the exercise of that severity belongs, peculiarly, to the Son. But to whom was he severe when on earth? Was it not, evidently, where, in reason, he could not be other than severe? And will He, who is the same yesterday, to-day and forever, be of a different nature on his final judgment throne, from that which he manifested in the days of his flesh?

He best understood his own nature, and his own dispensation; and his divine conduct on earth is the

surest, and only sure, demonstration of both. In what he says of himself, there is nothing to perplex the honest mind, but everything to assure and satisfy it. If it were duly remembered that he is "God, blessed forevermore," would not every suspicion of the Divine character forthwith vanish in the cheering effulgence of that unqualified graciousness with which we have to do? All gloomy dogmas should, in reason, retreat from this light, like birds of darkness from the rising sun. In the illumination of this "dayspring from on high," there should be no puzzle about doctrines, nor questionings about the terms on which upright persons stand with their God. "Behold," said he, "my mother and my brethren:" and again, "Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends." To what was Immanuel severe but to sin and to incorrigible sinners?

In this view of God, we are really drawn to him as our happiness; a thing strangely overlooked in modern divinity; but beautifully stated in the first four paragraphs of Leighton's 17th Prelection.

Truths Separate and Combined.

MANY err dangerously because they take a truth as the foundation of their error. This mistake lies, not in

the believing a falsehood, but in regarding one truth to the exclusion of another.

There are a great number of truths both in faith and in morals, which seem repugnant and contrary, all of which subsist together in wonderful order.

The ground of all heresy is the rejection of some of these truths ; and the source of all the objections made by heretics against us, is their ignorance of some these truths.

And it usually happens that not being able to conceive the connection of two seemingly opposite truths, and supposing that the admission of one necessarily includes a rejection of the other, they embrace the one and exclude the other.

The Nestorians maintained there were two persons in Jesus Christ, because there are two natures ; and the Eutychians, on the contrary, that there was but one nature, because He was but one person. The Church is orthodox in joining together both truths, the two natures and one person.

The body can no more live without the head than the head without the body. He that separates from the one or the other is no more of the body, nor does he belong any longer to Jesus Christ.

Speculative Theories.

THE importance which some theories give to apprehensions, in themselves speculative, if not in substance fanciful, and certainly intricate, would alone make it desirable to reduce our scheme of thought to the reality and certainty of evangelic truth. But what makes this much more important is, that in that division of attention, there is perpetual liableness to neglect the true and infallible sources of comfort, the fountain of living waters, and the well of water continually supplied therefrom in the soul; and to take up with the broken cisterns of empty notions and opinions, which only differ from the old Jewish ceremonies in not having the same venerable origin, and being metaphysical instead of material. On the contrary, the view deduced from Scripture has this to recommend it, that it draws all the faculties and powers of the mind, without the slightest divergement, to one point—the new creature, the life hid with Christ in God; it takes the mind at once out of all the thorny mazes of dogmatism, and makes its great object the business not of the head, but of the heart; it identifies every portion of our comfort with our growth in grace, our tenderness of conscience, our inward and outward walk with God; it sends us from perplexing disquisition to tranquillizing prayer: in a word, it gives unity to all thoughts and purposes, spir-

ity to all our movements and pursuits, and experimental matter-of-fact solidity to all our consolations. As St. Paul assures us that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink ; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost " ; and in what order these are attained, Isaiah most beautifully instructs us, " The work of righteousness shall be peace ; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever." To this order, then, it is, and to an exclusive attention to this inward kingdom, that my remarks would lead the human mind ; for, as St. Paul excellently adds, " He who in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men." St. James well describes this first consequence of true righteousness when he says, " the wisdom which is from above, is first pure, then peaceable " ; for there can be no true steady peace without, till there be first peace within ; nor this, again, but through purity ; nor this, but through rightly directed love ; nor this, but through faith of the operation of God. The position of the Prophet, then, is strictly equivalent to that of the Psalmist : " Great peace have they who love thy law." But St. Paul adds to peace, the still more perfect and confirmed sentiment, joy ; and, exactly in like manner, Isaiah carries forward the view to a second and more matured result, " quietness and assurance forever " ; a state evidently the same as being " rooted and grounded in love," or having that perfect love which casteth out fear. Being

described as the *effect*, while the former blessing, peace, is denominated the *work*, of righteousness, it gives the idea of an advanced stage of the same course as clearly as words could convey it. On this passage of Isaiah, the collect for evening prayer, "O God from whom all holy desires," is a noble comment. Holy desires, good counsels, and just works, are the first elements of righteousness, and lead to a peace which the world cannot give; but this is not rested in—a heart set to obey God's commandments is aspired to, which is the very essence of sanctification, and brings with it a defence from fear, and the passing of our time in rest and quietness.

Doctrinal Theories.

IF it were once felt that the gospel is a manifestation of divinely impressive facts, and not a notification of doctrinal theory, any further than as implied in those facts; and that it is, therefore, no subject for abstract cogitation, but a matter of which the heart alone can take cognizance, there would be a solid ground laid for theological pacification. It is not so much about the meaning of Holy Scripture that men contend, as about the construction of that doctrinal creed which has been so elaborately formed out of it. This it is, and this

only, which furnishes all the grounds of dispute ; and could theories be banished from the minds of theologists, and the Holy Scripture impartially examined, it would soon appear that there was no real foundation for the doctrinal deductions on which they so much rely. The whole theory of forensic justification, for instance, rests on the supposition of a primeval malediction. But was it an expression of malediction, that God made coats of skins, and clothed our first parents for their comfort and convenience, when they as yet knew not how to do it for themselves ? This single instance of gracious condescension shows that, notwithstanding their act of disobedience, they were the objects not of Divine wrath, but of Divine mercy ; and that the whole proceeding was the beginning of a scheme for exercising, through the Divine Mediator, the wisdom as well as the goodness of the infinite God, in a way in which only it could be manifested on such a subject as man became through the fall. . . .

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We are limited beings ; and must, of necessity, exercise our minds less upon one thing, in proportion as we distribute our inward powers upon different objects. And, besides, it is scarcely possible that we can be as concentrated in our pursuit of what is strictly spiritual, when we think that it is not the one thing needful, but belongs rather to the health and well-being, than to the life and being, of the true Christian. To trust

in our blessed Saviour, is our truest wisdom, and our unspeakable duty ; but how to trust in him ? He has come to save us ; but in his own way ; that is, by communicated grace, and by insuring our success when we ask for grace. We are to “ come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and grace to help us in time of need.” It is here alone that genuine and undelusive trust can be exercised. And it is in this course alone that we can secure to ourselves the substantial blessings of the everlasting Gospel.

What a wonderful fact it is, that, from the first century to the days of the schoolmen, no books whatever, resembling modern doctrinal books, were known among Christians. It was, in fact, not possible : for their view of justification was quite another thing—namely, the being made inwardly and practically righteous, through the transmutive influences of the grace of Christ.

Special and General Truths.

THE Gospel is rigorous ; the cutting off a right hand, or the plucking out of a right eye, though only used as metaphors and illustrations, is surely infallibly strict. The standard of religion should be always kept high : the very best of us often pull it down a good many pegs

in our practice ; but how much worse is the practice of those who fix a lower standard than the New Testament holds out ?

Much as we value the works of Addison and Johnson, yet their writings would have done a far wider and deeper good, had they not generalized religion so much. The soundness of Johnson's principles is incontestable ; but he scarcely ever enters on any evangelical truth. Addison had a devout spirit ; still he appears not to have entered into those deep views of evangelical truth which abound in Pascal and Taylor, in Leighton and Hall ; and it is to be regretted that they did not dwell more on the doctrines of Christianity, and upon what distinguishes it from all religious systems as a *scheme of salvation*.

Compare the influence of Johnson and Addison as moralists and Christians, celebrated and world-read as they are, with Baxter and Doddridge ; how do they sink into comparative insignificance before the pungent, searching, humbling teachings of believing men, who took the Bible as God gave it, daring neither to lessen nor to narrow its solemn and awful truths, as they stand recorded on its inspired pages. It is this high-raised Christianity only that can meet the wants of sinful man ; it is only such preaching and such teaching that can measure the depth of human frailty and corruption, and which can propose a remedy to satisfy the conscious need of the burdened spirit. Men are frail and

imperfect and sorrowful ; but they are something more, they are *sinner*s, and are conscious of a weight of ill-desert of which no one can relieve them. Christian generalities may arrest the ear and please the reason, but they do not and cannot strike the conscience, compel a man to stop, let go his hold on the world, and cry out with an earnestness never felt before, "What shall I do to be saved?"

It is only the distinguishing doctrines of the Bible, urged by those who have felt their power, that can have any direct or permanent influence upon the life and conscience of others. Any system short of a recognition of man's apostasy, his pardon and restoration through Jesus Christ, with the consequent fruits of a holy life, all the tremendous issues of which hang upon immediate action—any system short of this is inoperative and inefficient toward bringing men to repentance and faith, to holiness and heaven.

Theoretical and Practical Truths.

I.

HARDLY ever, perhaps, yet, except in the case of solitary individuals, has the Scripture been fairly con-

sulted for its own sense. The mind of man naturally demanding theories for its imagination, as well as substantial objects for its heart, and not seeming to itself to find as ready-made a provision in the New Testament for the former as for the latter, has successively gone to work for itself; and catching at a few hints furnished by scriptural metaphors or scriptural illustrations, it has imagined vast trains of consequences; and, after exercising some ingenuity of arrangement, has adopted the whole as the very divinity taught by the Scripture. In this way both Popery and Calvinism have severally propped themselves; and their doing so may have had great temporary use: but, as both are probably now failing, something better than either seems to be clearly called for.

What most desirable to make felt is, that the object of the Gospel is not to subdue our understandings to the reception of abstract propositions, or intricate dogmas, of whatever kind, but to possess our hearts with penetrating, vital facts; the due impression of which is religion, let a man theorize on them ever so little. The purpose of those facts being presented to us is, however, left too plain, and made too striking for anything to add new light to it. "The end of the commandment is love." "Neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but a new creature." There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that through them we might "become partakers

of the Divine nature." And, above all, our Saviour's own words—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." These are the great immediate ends of Christianity; and these alone lead to the remote ends—eternal glory, and God's perfect complacency in his handiwork: the infinite importance of which is often too little felt. A set of theories, or, rather, one complicate theory, made up, as before said, from human ingenuity working on a few metaphors and illustrations of Scripture, has too much supplanted the inward and solid religion we speak of; not merely as the one has been dwelt upon to the comparative depreciation of the other, but really, inasmuch as the doctrinal scheme implies an actual comparative drawing away of the mind and heart from the pursuit of what is to be felt and attained to in the way of actual experience. The change which the above Scriptures describe has nothing to do with any subtilty of opinion; and may even be substantially retarded and checked (nay, must be) by a taste for such subtilty prevailing. A common-sense apprehension, and a divinely wrought impression, of the facts of the Old and New Testament is that, and that only, which initiates us into, or keeps us in, the present kingdom of God. As this becomes stronger or weaker, our Christianity rises or sinks; for to be inwardly, spiritually, divinely impressed with God, the Creator and Governor of all things, as manifested in the Old Testament; and with God the Saviour

(the Saviour not from political disfranchisement, or forensic condemnation on penal infliction, merely or chiefly, but from an inward hell, an eternal death in the centre of the heart—a Saviour to bring us back to God, not by removing obstacles on God's part, except what in this way his moral government might have made expedient, but by subduing our corruptions and attracting our hearts), as set before us in the New, is, in its necessary results, to love the great God and Father of all; and to love God, as manifested in Scripture, especially and eminently as manifested to us in the person of the Divine Emanuel, is, summarily, to love all and everything that can exalt, felicitate, or adorn a rational creature.

It is a desirable object to draw religiously disposed people from doctrinal theories to this matter-of-fact simplicity and solidly Divine spirituality of religion. And, in proportion as they are drawn to it, they will come to see that the particular theory they have valued so much is the result of human fancy; that the righteousness of God, spoken of by St. Paul and by our Saviour, is the Divine plan, not of rating men as righteous by imputation, but of making them righteous by a new creation; and that, in this view, there is provision made for a high and heavenly walk on this earth, a rising above all painful struggling, a "being rooted and grounded in love," &c. (Ephes. iii. 17, &c.); of which doctrinal people seem to have scarcely an idea. In proportion,

then, as well-disposed people are brought to this, they will get out of those variable winds of doctrine which have hitherto been tossing the ship of the Church ; and they will pass into a sort of Pacific Ocean of truth.

II.

Every man naturally desires to increase in knowledge ; but what doth knowledge profit without the fear of the Lord ? Better is the humble clown that serveth God than the proud philosopher who, destitute of the knowledge of himself, can describe the course of the planets. He that truly knows himself becomes vile in his own eyes, and has no delight in the praise of man. If I knew all that the world contains, and had not charity, what would it avail me in the sight of God, who will judge me according to my deeds ?

Rest from an ordinate desire of knowledge, for it is subject to much perplexity and delusion. Learned men are fond of the notice of the world, and desire to be accounted wise : but there are many things the knowledge of which has no tendency to promote the recovery of our first divine life ; and it is surely proof of folly to devote ourselves wholly to that with which our supreme good has no connection. The soul is not to be satisfied with the multitude of words ; but a holy life is a continual feast, and a pure conscience the foundation of a firm and immovable confidence in God. The more thou

knowest, and the better thou understandest, the more severe will be thy condemnation, unless thy life be proportionably more holy. Be not, therefore, exalted for any uncommon skill in any art or science; but let the superior knowledge that is given thee make thee more fearful and more watchful over thyself. If thou supposest that thou knowest many things, and hast perfect understanding of them, consider how many more things there are which thou knowest not at all; and instead of being exalted with a high opinion of thy great knowledge, be rather abased by an humble sense of thy much greater ignorance. And why dost thou prefer thyself to another, since thou mayest find many who are more learned than thou art, and better instructed in the will of God?

Blessed is that man whom eternal Truth teacheth, not by obscure figures and transient sounds, but by direct and full communication! The perceptions of our senses are narrow and dull, and our reasoning on those perceptions frequently mislead us. To what purpose are our keenest disquisitions on hidden and obscure subjects, for our ignorance of which we shall not be brought into judgment at the great day of universal retribution? How extravagant the folly to neglect the study of the "one thing needful"; and wholly devote our time and faculties to that which is not only vainly curious, but sinful and dangerous as the state of "those that have eyes and see not"!

What have redeemed souls to do with the distinctions and subtilties of logical divinity? He whom the eternal Word condescendeth to teach is disengaged at once from the labyrinth of human opinions. For “of one word are all things”; and all things without voice or language speak Him alone: He is that divine principle which speaketh in our hearts; and without which there can be neither just apprehension nor rectitude of judgment. Now, he to whom all things are but this one, who comprehendeth all things in His will, and beholdeth all things in His light, hath “his heart fixed,” and abideth in the peace of God. O God, who art the truth, make me one with Thee in everlasting love! I am often weary of reading, and weary of hearing: in Thee alone is the sum of my desire! Let all teachers be silent, let the whole creation be dumb before Thee, and do Thou only speak unto my soul!

The more a man is devoted to internal exercises, and advanced in singleness and simplicity of heart, the more sublime and diffusive will be his knowledge. A spirit pure, simple, and constant, is not, like Martha, “distracted and troubled with the multiplicity of its employments,” however great; because, being inwardly at rest, it seeketh not its own glory in what it does, but “doth all to the glory of God”: for there is no other cause of perplexity and disquiet, but an unsubdued will and unmortified affections. A holy and spiritual mind, by reducing them to the rule and standard of his own mind,

becomes the master of all his outward acts ; he does not suffer himself to be led by them to the indulgence of inordinate affections that terminate in self, but subjects them to the unalterable judgment of an illuminated and sanctified spirit.

No conflict is so severe as his who labors to subdue himself ; but in this we must be continually engaged, if we would be strengthened in the inner man, and make real progress toward perfection. Indeed, the highest perfection we can attain to in the present state is alloyed with much imperfection, and our best knowledge is obscured by the shades of ignorance ; “ we see through a glass darkly : ” an humble knowledge of thyself, therefore, is a more certain way of leading thee to God than the most profound investigations of science. Science, however, or a proper knowledge of the things that belong to the present life, is so far from being blameable considered in itself, that it is good, and ordained of God ; but purity of conscience, and holiness of life, must ever be preferred before it ; and because men are more solicitous to learn much than to live well, they fall into error, and receive little or no benefit from their studies. But if the same diligence was exerted to eradicate vice and implant virtue, as is applied to the discussion of unprofitable questions, and the “ vain strife of words ; ” so much daring wickedness would not be found among the common ranks of men, nor so much licentiousness disgrace those who are emi-

ment for knowledge. Assuredly, in the approaching day of universal judgment, it will not be inquired what we have read, but what we have done ; not how eloquently we have spoken, but how holily we have lived.

Tell me, where is now the splendor of those learned doctors and professors, whom, while the honors of literature were blooming around them, you so well knew, and so highly revered? Their emoluments and offices are possessed by others, who scarcely have them in remembrance : the tongue of fame could speak of no name but theirs while they lived, and now it is utterly silent about them : so suddenly passeth away the glory of human attainments ! Had these men been as solicitous to be holy as they were to be learned, their studies might have been blessed with that honor which cannot be sullied, and that happiness which cannot be interrupted. But many are wholly disappointed in their hopes both of honor and happiness, by seeking them in the pursuit of “ science falsely so called,” and not in the knowledge of themselves, and the life and service of God ; and choosing rather to be great in the eyes of men, than meek and lowly in the sight of God, they become vain in their imaginations, and their memorial is written in the dust.

He is truly good, who hath great charity : he is truly great, who is little in his own estimation, and rates at nothing the summit of worldly honor : he is truly wise, who “ counts all earthly things but as dross.

that he may win Christ : ” and he is truly learned, who hath learned to abandon his own will, and do the will of God.

Ultimate and Mediatory Truths.

RELIGION contains two sets of truths, which may be denominated ultimate and mediatory ; the former refers to God as our original and end ; the latter to the Word made flesh, the suffering, dying, rising, ruling Saviour ; the way, the truth, and the life. Now these two views have almost ever been varying, in the minds even of the sincerely pious, with respect to comparative consequence : and while some have so regarded the ultimate, as in some degree to neglect the mediatory, so others have so fixed their views on the mediatory, as greatly and hurtfully to lose sight of the ultimate. Does not St. James seem to lose sight of the mediatory truths, compared with St. Paul and St. Peter ? Between these two extremes there is a middle point, where truth without either excess or defect resides ; and to gain this point ought to be the great object of religious inquiry : their happy combination appear to centre in those two transcendent men, Baxter and Leighton ; in the first of whom there is the soundest divinity, and in the latter the deepest piety since the apostolic age.

In the primitive church we have two eminent examples illustrating these truths—St. Augustin and St. Chrysostom. St. Augustin was the wisest master-builder after St. Paul, and the great teacher of efficient grace. St. Chrysostom possessed more sublime views of the dignity and happiness of Christianity than any one since the departure of St. John, and was the greatest teacher of consummate holiness; that is, consummate with regard to the Gospel standard. The followers of the former have, with few exceptions, been inflexibly solemn and severe; and if they are not impassioned generally become dry. Tranquil ardor and calm animation are seldom their properties. It must be owned that their special function does not tend to place them at their ease; their post being, like that of Aaron (when the plague was in Israel), “between the living and the dead.” Besides being much more impressed with the deep disease of human nature than with its healthful capabilities, they think of true piety only as of a continued conflict with natural corruption; and as an unequal progress (if a progress) in a slippery and difficult up-hill path, to which our entire nature is incurably adverse; and in which our hearts alone, without other enemies, are sufficient, ever and anon, to drag us backward. It is in these respects especially that the followers of St. Chrysostom form a contrast. They admit that our nature has become the slave of sin, and that nothing but the grace of God can

disenthral it ; but they maintain also, that when it is fully disenthralled it feels that it has recovered its own proper state, and is restored to its own native element ; in which it lives and moves, not as if transported into a foreign land, but as in the sphere which is congenial to all its radical tastes and faculties. This constitutes the great distinction between the teachers of the Augustin and Chrysostom schools ; and, to this day, it is that which gives a difference of character to the feelings, language, manners—may I not add even looks—of their respective followers. My great comfort on this point is, that what is deep in Augustin may be united with what is sublime in Chrysostom. I agree much with the former in what is necessary for the first overcoming of the original, and, too generally, aggravated disease ; but I no less agree with the latter and his admirable followers, in the subsequent health and strength of which our nature is capable.

The providential functions in the two early distinctions of the Catholic Church—the Greek and the Latin—became severally complete in the immortal labors of Chrysostom and Augustin. In the latter, the reanimating energies of the Gospel, their deep necessity and their infallible efficacy, are profoundly and wisely demonstrated : while, in the former, the heights of Christian virtue are pointed to, not only as what ought to be aimed at, but as what may be actually reached and en-

joyed, when the immortal mind of man has obtained new life and new wings from the omnipotent Spirit of God. On the other hand, Chrysostom seems to have had far less skill in the remedial operation of Christianity than Augustin; while the latter had so contemplated the moral disease of the human mind, as greatly to have lost sight of its restored capability.

St. Augustin reduced the evangelic doctrine to a truer system than it ever obtained before, and although the wisest master-builder, after St. Paul, that the Christian Church has yet been blessed with, nevertheless, he was the teacher and upholder of a low struggling piety, and described the Christian state as warfare and fluctuation to the last. St. Chrysostom believed and taught that mature Christianity was a state of perfect peace; and unclouded serenity of soul as the inheritance of the perfect Christian. No man since the departure of St. John ever possessed more sublime views of the dignity and happiness of Christianity than he. In him we find the very religion which the Church of England at this day exemplifies in her services; and, like the piety of our Prayer Book, he is equally free from the unballasted spirit of indefinite Protestantism, and the crouching servility of the Roman Catholic religion—his sober and deep retention of the Catholic faith and piety distinguishing him as much from the former, as his great, luminous, and soaring mind from the latter. In short, wherever the heart is to be poured forth “in

thoughts that breathe and words that burn," Chrysostom is without parallel. As a builder-up of the Church (for no one appears to have succeeded more nobly in building up himself), he certainly had not Augustin's philosophical understanding; and, as surely, Augustin wanted his winged and almost seraphic soul. The Latin Father had consummate skill; but he was deficient in elevation of spirit: the Greek Father had the most elevated spirit; but its soarings are undisciplined, though most sublime. Their talents were great in their several ways; they would be entitled, each, to a place in the selectest company of men of genius; I do not know which we could be best without; I love Chrysostom most; but I greatly value St. Augustin. Between them, they make up a scheme which approaches to the perfection of Christian wisdom.

Goodness.

THIS, of all virtues and dignities of the mind, is the greatest, being the character of the Deity; and without it man is a busy, mischievous, wretched thing. Goodness answers to the theological virtue charity, and admits no excess but error. The desire of power in excess caused the angels to fall; the desire of knowledge in excess caused man to fall: but in charity there is

no excess ; neither can angel or man come in danger by it.

The parts and signs of goodness are many. If a man be gracious and courteous to strangers, it shows he is a citizen of the world, and that his heart is no island cut off from other lands, but a continent that joins to them : if he be compassionate toward the afflictions of others, it shows that his heart is like the noble tree that is wounded itself when it gives the balm : if he easily pardons and remits offences, it shows that his mind is planted above injuries : if he be thankful for small benefits, it shows that he weighs men's minds and not their trash : but above all, if he have St. Paul's perfection, that he would wish to be an anathema from Christ for the salvation of his brethren, it shows much of a divine nature, and a kind of conformity with Christ himself.

The Goodness of the Deity.

THE young are not happy but when enjoying pleasure ; the old are happy when free from pain. And this constitution suits with the degrees of animal power which they respectively possess. The vigor of youth was to be stimulated to action by impatience of rest ; whilst to the imbecility of age, quietness and repose become positive gratifications. In one important respect

the advantage is with the old. A state of ease is, generally speaking, more attainable than a state of pleasure. A constitution, therefore, which can enjoy ease, is preferable to that which can taste only pleasure. This same perception of ease oftentimes renders old age a condition of great comfort ; especially when riding at anchor after a busy or tempestuous life. It is well described by Rousseau to be the interval of repose and enjoyment between the hurry and the end of life.

I am far, even as an observer of human life, from thinking that youth is the happiest season, much less the only happy one : as a Christian, I am willing to believe that there is a great deal of truth in the following representation given by a very pious writer, as well as excellent man : “ To the intelligent and virtuous, old age presents a scene of tranquil enjoyments, of obedient appetite, of well-regulated affections, of maturity in knowledge, and of calm preparation for immortality. In this serene and dignified state, placed as it were on the confines of two worlds, the mind of a good man reviews what is past with the complacency of an approving conscience ; and looks forward with humble confidence in the mercy of God, and with devout aspirations toward his eternal and ever-increasing favor.”

The prepollence of happiness over misery, of good over evil, of health, for example, and ease over pain and distress, is evinced by the very notice which calamities excite. What inquiries does the sickness of our

friends produce !—what conversation their misfortunes ! This shows that the common course of things is in favor of happiness ; that happiness is the rule, misery the exception. Were the order reversed, our attention would be called to examples of health and competency, instead of disease and want.

One great cause of our insensibility to the goodness of the Creator is the very *extensiveness* of his bounty. We prize but little what we share in common with the rest, or with the generality of our species. When we hear of blessings, we think forthwith of successes, of prosperous fortunes, of honors, riches, preferments, i. e., of those advantages and superiorities over others, which we happen either to possess, or to be in pursuit of, or to covet. The common benefits of our nature entirely escape us. Yet these are the great things. These constitute what most properly ought to be accounted blessings of Providence ; what alone, if we might so speak, are worthy of its care. Nightly rest and daily bread, the ordinary use of our limbs, and senses, and understandings, are gifts which admit of no comparison with any other. Yet, because almost every one we meet possesses these, we leave them out of our enumeration. They raise no sentiment ; they move no gratitude. Now, herein is our judgment perverted by our selfishness. A blessing ought in truth to be the more satisfactory ; the bounty at least of the donor is rendered more conspicuous, by its very diffusion, its

commonness, its cheapness : by its falling to the lot, and forming the happiness, of the great bulk and body of our species, as well as of ourselves. Nay, even when we do not possess it, it ought to be matter of thankfulness that others do. But we have a different way of thinking. We court distinction. That is not the worst : we see nothing but what has distinction to recommend it. This necessarily contracts our view of the Creator's beneficence within a narrow compass ; and most unjustly. It is in those things which are so common as to be of no distinction, that the amplitude of the Divine benignity is perceived.

The Love of God.

I.

THE purest motive of human action is the love of God. There may be motives stronger and more general, but none so pure. The religion, the virtue, which owes its birth in the soul to this motive, is always genuine religion, always true virtue. Indeed, speaking of religion, I should call the love of God not so much the groundwork of religion, as religion itself. So far as religion is disposition, it is religion itself. But though of religion it be more than the groundwork, yet, being

a disposition of mind, like other dispositions, it is the groundwork of action. Well might our blessed Saviour preach up, as he did, the love of God. It is the source of everything which is good in man. I do not mean that it is the only source, or that goodness can proceed from no other ; but that of all principles of conduct it is the safest, the best, the truest, the highest. Perhaps it is peculiar to the Jewish and Christian dispensations, to have formally and solemnly laid down this principle as a ground of human action. Elevated notions were entertained of the Deity by some wise and excellent heathens : but even these did not, that I can find, so inculcate the love of that Deity, or so propose and state it to their followers, as to make it a governing, actuating principle of life amongst them. This did Moses, or rather God by the mouth of Moses, expressly, formally, solemnly. This did Christ, adopting, repeating, ratifying, what the law had already declared ; and not only ratifying but singling it out from the body of precepts which composed the old institution, and giving it a preëminence to every other.

In one important respect the love of God excels all moral principles whatever ; and that is, in its comprehensiveness. It reaches every action ; it includes every duty. You cannot mention another moral principle which has this property in the same perfection. For instance, we cannot name a better moral principle than humanity. It is a principle which every one com-

mends, and justly ; yet in this very article of comprehensiveness it is deficient, when compared with the love of God. It will prompt us undoubtedly to do kind, and generous, and compassionate things toward our friends, our acquaintance, our neighbors, and toward the poor. In our relations to, and in our intercourse with, mankind, especially toward those who are dependent upon us, or over whom we have power, it will keep us from hardness, and rigor, and cruelty. In all this it is excellent. But it will not regulate us, as we require to be regulated, in another great branch of Christian duty, self-government and self-restraint. We may be exceedingly immoral and licentious in sinful indulgences without violating one principle of humanity ; at least without specifically violating it, and without being sensible of violating it. And this is by no means an uncommon case or character—namely, humanity of temper subsisting along with the most criminal licentiousness, and under a total want of personal self-government. The reason is, that the principle of conduct, though excellent as far as it goes, fails in comprehensiveness. Not so with the love of God. He who is influenced by that, feels his influence in all parts of duty, upon every occasion of action, throughout the whole course of conduct.

The thing with most of us to be examined into and ascertained is, whether it indeed guide us at all ; whether it be within us an efficient motive. I am far from taking

upon me to say that it is essential to this principle to exclude all other principles of conduct, especially the dread of God's wrath, and of its tremendous consequences : or that a person who is deterred from evil actions by the dread of God's wrath is obliged to conclude that, because he so much dreads God, he cannot love him. The Scripture, speaking of the love of God, hath said, that "perfect love casteth out fear ;" but it hath not said that in the soul of man this love is ever perfect : what the Scripture hath thus declared of perfect love is no more than what is just. The love of God, were it perfect, that is to say, were it such as his nature, his relation, his bounty to us, deserves ; were it adequate either to its object or to our obligation ; were it carried up as high as in a perfectly virtuous and rational soul it might be carried, would, I believe, absorb every other motive and every other principle of action whatever, even the fear of God among the rest. This principle, by its nature, might gain a complete possession of the heart and will, so that a person acting under its influence would take nothing else into the account, would reflect upon no other consequence or consideration whatever. Possibly, nay, probably, this is the condition of some higher order of spirits, and may become ours by future improvement, and in a more exalted state of existence : but it cannot, I am afraid, be said to be our condition now.

Religion may spring from various principles, begin

in various motives. It is not for us to narrow the promises of God which belong to sincere religion, from whatever cause it originates. But of these principles, the purest, the surest, is the love of God, forasmuch as the religion which proceeds from it is sincere, constant, and universal. It will not, like fits of terror and alarm, produce a temporary religion. The love of God is an abiding principle. It will not, like some other, produce a partial religion. It is coextensive with all our obligations. Practical Christianity may be comprised in three words: devotion, self-government, and benevolence. The love of God in the heart is a fountain, from which these three streams of virtue will not fail to issue. The love of God also is a guard against error in conduct, because it is a guard against those evil influences which mislead the understanding in moral questions. In some measure, it supplies the place of every rule. He who has it truly within him, has little to learn. Look steadfastly to the will of God, which he who loves God necessarily does; practise what you believe to be well pleasing to him; leave off what you believe to be displeasing to him; cherish, confirm, strengthen, the principle itself which sustains this course of external conduct, and you will not want many lessons, you need not listen to any other monitor.

II.

God himself, who is love, religion strives to express by love, and measures its growth by the increase and activity of its love. For Christian love is the last and divinest birth, the harmony, unity, and godlike transfiguration of all the vital, intellectual, moral, and spiritual powers. Now it manifests itself as the sparkling and ebullient spring of well-doing in gifts and in labors; and now as a silent fountain of patience and long-suffering, the fulness of which no hatred or persecution can exhaust or diminish; a more than conqueror in the persuasion that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate it from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus the Lord. Rom. viii. 38, 39.

From God's love through his Son, crucified for us from the beginning of the world, religion begins: and in love toward God and the creatures of God it hath its end and completion.

Join with me, reader! in the fervent prayer that we may seek within us what we can never find elsewhere, that we may find within us what no words can put there, that one only true religion which elevateth knowing into being, which is at once the science of being, and the being and the life of all genuine science.

III.

The love of God, as it is the only source of every right feeling and action, so it is the only principle which necessarily involves the love of our fellow-creatures. There is a love of partiality, but not of benevolence; of sensibility, but not of philanthropy; of friends and favorites, of parties and societies, but not of men collectively. It is true, we may, and do, without this principle, relieve man's distress, but we do not bear with his faults. We may promote his fortune, but we do not forgive his offence; above all we are not anxious for his immortal interests. We could not see him want without pain, but we can see him sin without emotion. We could not hear of a beggar perishing at our door without horror, but we can without concern witness an acquaintance dying without repentance. Is it not strange that we must participate of the Divine nature, before we can really love the human? It seems to be an insensibility to sin, rather than want of benevolence to mankind, that makes us naturally pity their temporal and be careless of their spiritual wants: but does not this very insensibility proceed from a want of love to God?

IV.

Love is the greatest thing that God can give us ; for himself is love : and it is the greatest thing we can give to God ; for it will also give ourselves, and carry with it all that is ours. The Apostle calls it the bond of perfection : it is the old, and it is the new, and it is the great commandment, and it is all the commandments ; for it is the fulfilling of the law. It does the work of all other graces without any instrument but its own immediate virtue. For, as the love to sin makes a man sin against all his own reason, and all the discourses of wisdom, and all the advices of his friends, and without temptation, and without opportunity, so does the love of God ; it makes a man chaste without the laborious arts of fasting and exterior discipline, temperate in the midst of feasts, and is active enough to choose it without any intermedial appetites, and reaches at glory through the very heart of grace, without any other arms but those of love. It is a grace that loves God, for himself, and our neighbors for God. The consideration of God's goodness and bounty, the experience of those profitable and excellent emanations from him, may be, and most commonly are, the first motive of our love ; but when we are once entered, and have tasted the goodness of God, we love the spring for its own excellency, passing from passion to reason, from

thinking to adoring, from sense to spirit, from considering ourselves to a union with God : and that is the image and the representation of heaven ; it is beatitude in picture, or rather the infancy and beginnings of glory.

We need no incentives by way of special enumeration to move us to the love of God ; for we cannot love anything for any reason, real or imaginary, that excellence is infinitely more eminent in God. There can but two things create love—perfection and usefulness : to which answer on our part, 1st, admiration, and 2d, desire ; and both these are centred in love. For the entertainment of the first, there is in God an infinite nature, immensity or vastness without extension or limit, immutability, eternity, omnipotence, omniscience, holiness, dominion, providence, bounty, mercy, justice, perfection in himself, and the end to which all things and all actions must be directed, and will at last arrive. The consideration of which may be heightened, if we consider our distance from all these glories ; our smallness and limited nature, our nothing, our inconstancy, our age like a span, our weakness and ignorance, our poverty, our inadvertency and inconsideration, our disabilities and disaffections to do good, our harsh natures and unmerciful inclinations, our universal iniquity, and our necessities and dependencies, not only on God originally and essentially, but even our need of the meanest of God's creatures, and our being obnoxious to the

weakest and most contemptible. But, for the entertainment of the second, we may consider that in him is a torrent of pleasure for the voluptuous ; he is the fountain of honor for the ambitious, an inexhaustible treasure for the covetous. Our vices are in love with fantastic pleasures and images of perfection, which are truly and really to be found nowhere but in God. And therefore our virtues have such proper objects that it is but reasonable they should all turn into love ; for certain it is that this love will turn all into virtue. For in the scrutinies for righteousness and judgment, when it is required whether such a person be a good man or no, the meaning is not, “ What does he believe ? or what does he hope ? ” but what he loves.

V.

Love is the noblest fruit of illumination and faith, the true source and parent of joy and peace. Love is the most pregnant seed of a Divine life ; it is the principle that animates, moves, and forms the whole body of righteousness. Love is the bond of union and communion with the Father and his Son Jesus through the Spirit. And it is but fit, that what renders us most like God, should render us most dear to him too : and this love does ; for God is love.

VI.

O Divine love ! the sweet harmony of souls ! the music of angels ! the joy of God's own heart ! the very darling of his bosom ! the source of true happiness, the pure quintessence of heaven, that which reconciles the jarring principles of the world, and makes them all chime together ! that which melts men's hearts into one another ! See how St. Paul describes it, and you cannot choose but have your affections enamoured toward it : " Love envieth not, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity ; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Let us express and illustrate this sweet harmonious affection, under all circumstances : that so if it be possible, we may tune the world into better music. Especially in matters of religion let us strive, with all meekness, to instruct and convince one another. Let us endeavor to promote the Gospel of peace, the dove-like Gospel, with a dove-like spirit. This was the way by which the Gospel at first was propagated in the world ; Christ " did not cry, nor lift up his voice in the streets ; a bruised reed he did not break, and the smoking flax he did not quench ;" and yet, " he brought forth judgment unto victory." He whispered the Gospel to us from mount Sion in a still voice ; and yet

the sound thereof went out quickly, throughout all the earth. The Gospel, at first, came down upon the world gently and softly, like the dew upon Gideon's fleece; and yet it quickly penetrated quite through it: and, doubtless, this is still the most effectual way to promote it further. Sweetness and ingenuousness will more command men's mind than passion and severity; as the soft pillow sooner breaks the flint than the hardest marble. Let us follow truth in love; and of the two, indeed, be contented rather to miss conveying a speculative truth, than to part with love. When, by the strength of truth, we would convince men of any error, let us withal pour the sweet balm of love upon their heads. Truth and love are the two most powerful things in the world; and, when they both go together, they cannot easily be withstood. The golden beams of truth, and the silken cords of love, twisted together, will draw men forward with a sweet violence, whether they will or not.

Divine Providence.

EXCEPTING divine grace, there is no sublimer matter of inquiry than divine providence. By divine grace, God influences our minds and hearts. By divine providence, he disposes and arranges all our circumstances,

as inhabitants of this world ; regulating everything, great or minute, by which our feelings or habits can be affected, in the way which he sees will be conducive to the greatest good here and hereafter.

Some have distinguished between a general and particular providence. But what is usually called general providence is quite another thing. It is nothing more than that which it might be allowable to call the clock-work of nature ; in other words, that assemblage of seeming mechanical movements, by which provision is made for sustaining the system of this world, and the varieties of animal life.

Providence, in its true sense, is the actual superintendence of the *omnipresent* and *omnipotent* God. It is the direct exercise of infinite wisdom and illimitable power ; first, for the gradual accomplishment of all God's great designs respecting society at large ; secondly, for securing and preparing for that purpose all necessary instrumentality, whether individual or collective ; and, thirdly, for adjusting the whole tissue of life, and making all things work together for good to those who place themselves within what we might call the inner circle of providence, by assiduity in prayer, and devotedness of heart and conduct.

It is in this last view that the consideration of providence is at once universally interesting, and universally obligatory. Attention to what God is doing in the world at large, is one of the noblest and most delightful

habits that the mind of man can acquire; and where there are powers and leisure for this examination, the neglect of it is inexcusable. But the actings of Providence for individual good are the indispensable concern of all. None are overlooked in this gracious superintendence, whose wish to partake of it is earnest and cordial. Of course, all are bound to attend to that of which every one participates. Doubtless even in this narrowest observation of providence, the sensible and well-disciplined mind will have greatly the advantage; but it is a comfortable fact, that every mind capable of devotion, in proportion to its actual piety, becomes qualified for this wise and happy exercise of its thinking powers.

The idea of an interior circle of providence, embracing those who take pains to make God their friend, appears to be supported by the entire tenor of Holy Scripture. It is not said that all things work together for the good of all, but specially for good to those who love God. The angels are ministering spirits to those who shall be heirs of salvation. The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them who fear him; and ten righteous persons would have saved Sodom, out of which the single righteous man was miraculously delivered. To quote proofs of this discriminating care would be to transcribe the whole sacred history. We will, therefore, only add, that the strongest expressions ever used on the subject are those of our Lord, respect-

ing the sparrows and the hairs of the head ; and nothing can be clearer than the strict applicability of this divine declaration to those, and those only, who were then, or should be afterwards, sincere followers of the blessed Redeemer.

It is not meant to intimate that persons of a different description derive no advantage from God's providential administration. It is, on the contrary, certain that this benefit is signally extended to those who are yet incapable of possessing moral qualities ; that is, to little children. This fact is put past doubt by our Lord himself. It is reasonable to think that the care exercised over the child does not wholly cease until the case becomes desperate ; and who can calculate in how many cases God sees ground for continuing his gracious attention, where shortsighted man abandons hope ? Numberless special instances may arise from the prayers of pious parents ; and on the whole, nothing can be more just or more beautiful, than the saying of the woman of Tekoah to David, that, though God doth not " respect any person, yet doth he devise means that his banished be not expelled from him."

To assert, therefore, a peculiar providence, is not to maintain an exclusive providence. God's goodness is unbounded ; and it is delightful to think in how many ways it may be exercised beyond our power of conception. But, in seeking instruction or comfort for ourselves, we must attend to what God has expressly

promised ; and, in the promises of the Holy Scriptures respecting providential care, we shall find that the more excellent the thing promised, the more exact is the definition of those to whom the blessing belongs.

An humble mind might possibly, at first view, be discouraged by this statement. "Who am I," it might say, "to admit the hope of being amongst the objects of such distinguished regard ? General blessings might be reckoned upon ; but to have place in an interior circle of providence, sounds so like presumption, that I fear to entertain the thought."

The truth, however, is, that no other view of providence could give the same satisfaction to the thinking, or the same encouragement to the humble. Providence, to meet our simplest idea, must be supposed to adapt its actings to the circumstances of those for whom it acts. Were this property wanting, the name of Providence would not be applicable. The circumstances, then, to be taken into account, are evidently of two kinds—wants to be relieved, and capacities of relief. We ourselves continually meet cases of extreme want, which yet we cannot relieve, because the suffering individuals could not avail themselves of the natural remedy. This, for example, is the case of those who have neither means of support, nor habits of industry. Thus, in the great economy of Providence, what effectual good can we suppose communicable to those who are obstinately regardless of that benefit to which all

other benefits are subservient? As has already been observed, foreseen amendment, or better dispositions at bottom, perceived by Him who sees all things; or prayers of parents, or other special causes, may make an essential difference; but, in the general course of things, we might almost dare to ask, what can even Providence do, at least without infringing natural order, for those who will do nothing for themselves? Is it then unreasonable to suppose, that, with the exceptions stated, they who obstinately disregard God, and prefer living as brutes to living as men, can be subjects for Providence to act upon, in little if any other respect, than with reference to collective good? To this object, we cannot question that not only wicked men, but the unseen "rulers of the darkness of this world," are daily and hourly making unconscious contributions; Divine Wisdom overruling all the movements of both, to the promotion of the ends aimed at by infinite benignity.

As this view, then, is most rational, so is it most encouraging; for, what can better excite confidence, than the assurance that the moment we turn toward God, we come within the sphere of His special guidance and protection? As incapacity alone excludes from this blessing, the frame of heart which makes us capable, insures our participation. The humblest spirit which looks up to God, with deepest apprehensions of not being heard because it deems itself the unworthiest of

beings, has as sure ground for relying on the divine care as the highest archangel. "God is love," says the Apostle who lay in our Saviour's bosom. Being, then, essential love, He meets the returning prodigal by an adorable necessity of nature ; and, from henceforth, the happy individual, however before alienated through incapacity, becomes, as long as he retains the same honest disposition, an object of that attention and care to which no limit can be placed, because exercised by Him whose knowledge and power are as infinite as his goodness.

Thus far we seem to be treading on the firmest ground. The limit we have drawn around the sphere of Providence, seems marked out, equally, by reason and Holy Scripture ; and every promise of the one, and intimation of the other, unite in evincing the certainty, exactness, and universality of that superintendence, in which all the inmates of that interior sphere participate. How true, then, is that declaration of St. Paul, that godliness is profitable for all things, having promise both of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. In this view, the lowest servant of God possesses an inheritance, even in the present world, infinitely higher, as well as more secure, than that of "mightiest monarchies." Our own times have witnessed the frailty of tenure by which these last are held ; while, with what unimpeachable truth does the son of Sirach say, "Look at the generations of old, and

see, did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded? or, did any abide in his fear, and was forsaken? or, whom did he ever despise that called upon Him?"

Nothing, therefore, could be more erroneous, than for those who fear God, to suppose themselves as liable as ever to "the changes and chances of this mortal life." Change, if God see good, they may experience; but the sincerely religious have done with chance. Having once cordially committed themselves to God's paternal care, they can meet nothing in their course, which is not the result of Divine adjustment—of wisdom, which cannot err—of love, to which the tenderness of the tenderest parent bears no comparison. This is no doubtful speculation: it is included in that one word, God. If our minds were but competent adequately to expand this one idea, we should need nothing further, except consciousness of our own honest purpose, to set us at ease, for time as well as eternity. But the sacred volume contains this expansion. In every part, but above all, in the four Gospels, it unfolds Deity. It shows us Him, who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto, condescending to provide for the minutest of our wants; directing, guarding, and assisting us, each hour and moment, with an infinitely more vigilant and exquisite care than our own utmost self-love can attain to.

We certainly see nothing like this in the general course of society; and, perhaps, this is one principal

reason why many, who seem to be influenced by Divine grace, are comparatively little impressed with Divine Providence. They look for operations of grace within ; but they think, with some shadow of plausibility, that providence implies external results ; whereas nothing is seen to meet the eye of an observer, which is not resolvable into human agency, or into that which is called contingency. It is true that no sincerely religious person uses this language ; but I doubt if it is not often the lurking suspicion of their minds : and to be habitually superior to such suggestions, is the privilege, not of the merely sincere, but of the wise and confirmed Christian.

It appears, however, from the above observations, that the world at large is not the stage whereon to look for the actings of Providence. The enlightened mind may, from time to time, discover, in that chaos, the movements which are tending to general amelioration ; and, possibly, the more this great subject is studied, the reference of passing transactions to a blessed and glorious issue will become clearer and more extended. But the providence with which it is necessary to be acquainted, in order to personal comfort, must be sought in another quarter. If special superintendence can be expected only where it is implied ; if culture can be applied only where there is capacity, and guidance exercised where there is willingness to yield to it, then (however difficult the discrimination), in those

only who fear God and keep his commandments, can we expect to find satisfactory tokens of that providence, on which Holy Scripture invites us to place reliance.

But then, as has been just hinted, the finding genuine specimens is a matter of extreme difficulty. We can proceed but a little way in estimating living characters; and that little, doubtfully. In fact, they must not only have goodness, but wisdom; and must, also, be ready to repose unlimited confidence, to make any communication on this subject satisfactory, or even interesting. But it is further to be observed, that even the sincerely good are not always fair examples of providential distinction; because, to be sincere is not always to be consistent. There is a double-mindedness, which cleaves even to those who mean to be upright; a halting, in some respect or other, perhaps unconsciously, between God and the world—between things invisible and things earthly. Such cannot exemplify special providence, when they are continually straying out of the interior circle. Not distinguishing themselves from the world, in spirit and conduct, to that degree which their “high calling” requires, they cannot justly reckon on being distinguished from the world, in the movements of Providence; nay, even their safety may require, that the distinction allotted them should be that of peculiar liability to suffering. As St. Paul intimates to the disorderly Corinthians (classing himself with them to abate the severity): “When we are

judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

Still, however, extraordinary instances sometimes present themselves, in which it is almost impossible not to recognize at once the marks of providential designation. (We speak not of what the world sees in them: but refer to those only who are capable of discerning moral qualities, and appreciating moral effects.) We seem to see much of this nature in Col. Gardiner, in Doctor Doddridge, in the two Wesleys, in Whitefield, and even in others of less celebrity, such as John Newton, and the poet Cowper. In the last named it is granted there was something awfully obscure; but through that obscurity, such rays of providential light dart forth, as to make the special designation not less clear than the singular sufferings were mysterious. But, in adverting to this class, generally, we perceive astonishing evidences of an unseen hand, training each for his work, leading him into his department, and making him serve the destined purpose. We conceive, at the same time, that these are examples of what Providence *can* do, much rather than what it *will* do. In fact, such are not private individuals: they belong to the second sphere of Providence stated—namely, that of apt instruments for general benefit. Still they deserve our closest observation, as evincing, in various ways, the most palpable, and sometimes the most circumstantial, operations of Providence; and, though mere private persons have

no right to expect that their common life will be marked by equally uncommon interpositions, they see, nevertheless, in those instances, the exactness, as well as certainty, of the superintendence under which they themselves live ; and which, if they be faithful to their vocation, will be as vigilant and as effectual for them, in a less apparent way. If the care be exercised, it is of no moment whether it be open or secret : the benefit conferred will be the same, or rather, we cannot doubt, that for our spiritual advantage, the secret method is far preferable ; as it corresponds better with that life of faith, which is our destined path to perfection. Besides, when it is proved, in any instance, that such an exact superintendence exists, then the goodness and impartiality of God assure us of our full share in it, if we only be not wanting to our heavenly calling.

As if to remove all doubt on this head, it has pleased Divine wisdom, that numerous cases of private Christians should be recorded, in which sometimes the marked interference, and frequently the obvious guidance, of Providence, is so manifested as to leave no rational doubt of what is invisibly transacted ; and to afford the happiest comment on those promises of Divine support and patronage, which are made unreservedly to the faithful servants of God. These promises we are thus additionally warranted to regard as our infallible pledge of substantial safety, sure support, and eventual felicity. It is perhaps requisite, in order

fully to feel this satisfaction, that we should keep the special point of providential care in view, when we read the lives of good persons. We overlook that which we are not in search of; while, at the first glance, we see that for which we are solicitous. It must be acknowledged, that in this inquiry, there is peculiar need of exercising sound judgment, lest we should form conclusions on insufficient grounds; but, on the other hand, we are to give no hearing to that Sadducean spirit, which would present God as sitting on the circle of the heaven and not regarding what is done either in heaven or earth. Nothing is in itself more reasonable, than that Divine Goodness should be attentive to those who reject all other reliance: marks of such attention are, therefore, to be expected; and when satisfactorily found, we may say of them what Nicole says of remarkable operations of Divine grace upon the mind: “J’estime beaucoup ces sortes d’histoire, quand elles viennent par le canal d’un homme sincère et intelligent, et qui ne fait pas une vertu d’une crédulité indiscrete. Il me semble que ce sont des nouvelles de l’autre monde, qui servent à détacher de celui-ci.”* Even these last words are applicable to our point; for every clear movement of Providence is a fresh notification of the in-

* I value very highly histories of this kind, when they are communicated by a man of sincerity and intelligence, and who does not make a virtue of ill-judged credulity. They appear to me like tidings from the other world, which serve to detach us from the present.

visible world, and a new engagement upon us to “look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.”

After all, the fountain-head of information on this subject must be found in the Sacred Scriptures. We have here the principles of Divine Providence laid down, its purposes declared, its movements infallibly exemplified. It would be unsafe to rely on any supposed instance of providential interference, which did not accord with this primary standard; and it is by clear, deep, and particular acquaintance with this archetype that we shall be qualified to estimate what we find recorded respecting others, or what we experience in the course of our own life.

To study the Scripture with this special view, is one of the most interesting, as well as useful employments in which our minds can be engaged. The principles on which Divine Providence acts, present themselves throughout both Testaments. The promises in both are so full, so definite, and so comprehensive of all times, all circumstances, and all persons who are not self-excluded, as to bring substantial consolation home to every upright bosom. But, perhaps, the most delightful view of all is that afforded by the exemplifications. In these we find what cannot be too closely examined, too often recurred to, or too confidently relied on. In this vast field, we must touch but on one or two points. It must strike us, as peculiarly worth observation, that

often in the most momentous instances of Scripture History, the event turns on occurrences of the most simple and common kind. We see such movements only as happen in daily life ; and yet these seeming contingencies prove, at length, to have been the first lineaments of designs, commensurate with time, and extending their results through eternity.

For example, when Jacob sent his son Joseph to inquire after his brethren who had gone to feed their father's flocks in Schechem ; or when, in the meantime, they were removing from Schechem to Dothan, who could have thought that these little transactions were to lead to any important issue ? Yet, *hence* arose Joseph's greatness, the relief of his family, and their sojourning in Egypt. Had Joseph not been sent, or had his brethren not been in the exact line of the Midianitish merchant-men, the same events, we may venture to say, could not have ensued. Thus these apparently trivial incidents form as real links in the chain of Israelitish history as the most remarkable miracles.

When St. Peter and St. John were sent to prepare for our Lord's last Supper, how far was it from the thoughts of the man bearing the pitcher of water, that he was serving a purpose in the most stupendous transaction of which this earth was ever the scene ! There was no felt impulse ; the man, to his own simple apprehension, was doing what he did daily ; and yet, in the direction of his steps on that particular occasion,

there was as real Divine agency, as in multiplying the loaves, or in changing the water into wine.

These examples are sufficient to evince with what condescension and familiarity Divine Goodness takes cognizance of human circumstances; and how, without seeming to interfere, He can make that which we should deem the most casual occurrence, conducive to the most important consequences. From such a method of acting, then, what may we not hope? Under such a management, what can we rationally fear? Let us, through Divine Grace, only keep within the circle where these movements are carried on, and we need not doubt, that, though we see nothing remarkable in our course, an unseen hand is directing every circumstance, so as, in the most effectual manner, to avert what might hurt us, to ensure what will benefit us, and to direct all our concerns to the best possible issue.

When I say, “though we see nothing remarkable,” I mean to speak strictly of that to which these latter observations apply—namely, the means by which Providence works; for it is morally certain that we shall perceive the results: it may be not immediately. The words of our Saviour to Peter, “What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter,” may sometimes apply to our case, as truly as to his. But, often, these mysterious arrangements become, if not distinctly, yet satisfactorily intelligible. If the dark allotment is not actually cleared up, other dispensations of

Providence are so obvious, and so consolatory, as to leave no trace of doubt respecting the design of that which was obscure; and, on the whole, it is certain that the thoroughly devout mind enjoys, as it travels onward, accumulated evidence of providential superintendence. I believe that this is felt in proportion to the intensity and steadiness with which we have daily recourse to God, and to the simplicity and fidelity with which we follow his guidance.

If our heart be upright, but our habit of devotion somewhat relaxed, a painful occurrence may be permitted to brace our mind. I have often perceived this in myself, and have sometimes thought that there may be occasional torpor of the animal frame, without actual sin, from which we could not easily emerge, if we were not roused by some stimulus. I often think of these words, "And, being in agony, he prayed more earnestly;" and I conclude, that, if our REDEEMER'S devotion admitted of being thus heightened in intensity, how wise and gracious may it be, from time to time, to counteract our frailty, and to dispel our mental drowsiness, by excitements of something of the same nature, but incomparably more gentle.

Still, however, I am inclined to believe that the peaceful and luminous path is that in which Providence delights most to lead its faithful votaries; and that we may hope, with humility, as well for such comfort as may consist with our true interests here, as for the con-

summation of bliss hereafter. I humbly conceive that God is willing to be made a friend by us ; that he likes we should resort to him continually, in every step of life, and about everything respecting which it is reasonable for us to be solicitous. I almost dare to think, that, if we do this of ourselves, he will encourage us in such a course, rather than do that which would seem like forcing us to it. I presume we shall not be forced, if we do not need it ; but, on the contrary, drawn into closer confidence.

How deeply gracious is that saying, “Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things” ; consequently, we shall not be deprived of them, nor they be withheld from us, if there be not some necessity ; and how such necessity may be avoided, we are told in those most comfortable words, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things (whatever is requisite to make our passage through life tranquil and substantially happy) shall be added unto you.” There may be mysterious reasons for exceptions ; but this, clearly, is the general rule.

The Treasure and the Pearl.

THERE are only two ways of attaining true religion : the one, by conversion, after a state of sin, or,

at least, of thoughtlessness; the other, by the blessing of Heaven upon a wise and pious education. The blessing acquired is the same substantially in both cases; the temper necessary to its acquirement is identical in both; but other circumstances are remarkably, and most instructively, diversified.

The parable of the treasure represents the person as finding what he was not looking for. He stumbles on it unexpectedly: but recognizing its worth, not merely his judgment and affections, but his passions, come immediately into operation. "He hideth it,"—an expression of fear; "and for joy thereof he goeth, and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." We have a picture of his emotions, in the simple but most expressive terms, that are used to describe them.

Thus it is, generally, with the converted prodigal. He is, for the most part, reclaimed from profligacy, or roused from insensibility, by some unlooked-for occurrence; some awakening providence; some earnest address of a preacher; some opportune conversation of a friend or acquaintance. He becomes impressed with an object, which is to him as new and as strange as a hoard of gold, which had been concealed in the earth, could be to the finder of it: and, resolved to possess what he has discovered, there is no sacrifice of what he has hitherto valued, which he is not ready to submit to. He sees that religion alone, the vital religion of the heart, can confer either present peace, or everlasting

felicity ; and earth, with all that earth can bestow, appears less than nothing, in comparison of the treasure with which he has unexpectedly become acquainted. "For joy thereof, he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."

"Buyeth that field." Is there any particular meaning in the circumstance—the buying the field in order to enjoy the treasure? It would seem to point out, what experience has often verified, that converts to serious religion are under a kind of necessity of receiving that blessing, in the special manner in which it is offered to them. Being captivated by religion, instead of having pursued after it, they have little, if any, power of discriminating between what is substantial and what is circumstantial. They must take the blessing with its accidental adjuncts, or hazard disappointment. Do they, therefore, find it among any particular people? They are led by a sort of instinctive feeling, a conscious necessity for every aid, especially for what has already been effectual to their illumination, to attach themselves to that people : and where such an attachment, in this particular case, is not formed, the impression is too often transient. Acted upon, rather than acting for themselves, they must keep themselves within the sphere of influences already found to be powerful, in order to preserve the warmth which has begun to glow in their hearts. It is, therefore, a most suitable feature in the representation, that the field is purchased

by him who wishes to secure that which he has found in it, and which he could have no expectation of finding elsewhere.

The parable of the pearl, however, marks a very different path to the same end. It places a merchant-man before us, who traffics in pearls, and who exerts both skill and industry to possess himself of the best. It must be felt, in the very first instance, that scarcely could a figure have been found more elegant or more simple. A pearl of the finer kind combines a beauty, a richness, and a purity, hardly to be matched in any other production of nature. To choose a pearl of matchless value, therefore, as the emblem of evangelic religion, was to make this heavenly object as engaging to our mental taste, and love of refined pleasure, as it is, in its own acknowledged nature, impressive on our understanding and our conscience. He whom this pursuit occupies, is a merchant-man: that is, one trained, as well as devoted, to business. The search is, therefore, determinate, discriminative, unremitting. It is the main business of life. This case, then, corresponds to such Christians only as, from youth, have been trained up in the way which they should go. In these alone can be the settled habits, the effectual self-direction, the convergement to one point of all the powers and tendencies of the soul, which are indicated by the illustration. It is intimated, however, that, even here, there is a discovery, at a particular time, which fixes

choice, and induces a more decided action. The merchant-man is seeking goodly pearls; that is, the mind and heart are devoted to the pursuing of what is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report; and no doubt, such is the result which may be hoped for, from the blessing of God upon wise and well-directed education. But then, excellent as these objects are, they are not the one thing needful. They are but goodly pearls. Not the one pearl of great price. That is, initiatory habits of the promising kind are formed, but the efficacious principle of inward and spiritual life has not yet come into clear and conscious operation. In such a pursuit, and on the supposition of necessary knowledge, the interior vitality will not long remain unknown; and when distinctly understood, it will be so appreciated, by the rightly disposed mind, as to correspond most fully to this figurative representation. It is to be observed that the signs of emotion, which were mentioned in the case of the treasure, are not intimated here. The decision of conduct is, however, exactly the same; the merchant-man, having "found one pearl of great price, sells all and buys it." Clearly discovering the nature and excellency of vital Christianity, he chooses it accordingly, unconditionally, and at whatever cost, for his portion, and the lot of his inheritance.

But be it observed that the pearl is purchased alone. In the former parable, the treasure could not

be had without the field. In this parable, the blessing is obtained simply, without accompaniment. Does not this imply, that he who devotes himself, from early life, to the wise and steady pursuit of the one thing needful, not only accomplishes his object, but accomplishes it in the most effectual and most excellent way? His views of religion are obscured by no uncomfortable prejudices; his exercise of religion is not debased by any slavish observances. His choice of happiness has been not the less deliberate act of his judgment than the movement of his heart. He understands the full value of his purchase; and there is not one circumstance to abate his satisfaction, or mingle the shadow of sadness with his “sober certainty of waking bliss.”

True Knowledge.

BE not captivated by the subtilty and elegance of human compositions; for “the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.” Attend only to the truths of My word, which enlighten the understanding, and inflame the heart; which excite compunction, and pour forth the balm of true consolation. Read My word, not for the reputation of critical skill and controversial wisdom, but to learn how to mortify thy evil passions; a

knowledge of infinitely more importance than the solution of all the abstruse questions that have perplexed men's minds, and divided their opinions.

When, however, thou hast meekly and diligently read My word, still thou must also have recourse to Me. I am He that teacheth man knowledge, and giveth that light and understanding to the prayerful which no human instruction can communicate. He who listeneth to My voice shall soon become wise, and be renewed in the spirit of truth. But, woe be to them who, instead of turning to Me to learn my will, devote their time and labor to vain theories of human speculation !

I am He that exalteth the humble and simple mind, and imparteth to it, in a short time, such a perception of eternal truth, as it could not acquire by a life of study in the schools of men. I teach not like men, with the clamor of uncertain words, or the confusion of opposite opinions ; or with the strife of formal disputation, in which victory is more contended for than truth : I teach in still and soft whispers, to relinquish earth, and seek after heaven ; to relinquish carnal and temporal enjoyment, and sigh for spiritual and eternal ; to shun honor and bear contempt ; to place all hope and dependence upon Me ; and above all in heaven and on earth, most ardently to love Me.

PART VIII.

“LORD ! with what care hast thou begirt us round !
Parents first season us. Then schoolmasters
Deliver us to laws. They send us bound
To rules of reason. Holy messengers ;
Pulpits and Sundays ; sorrow dogging sin ;
Afflictions sorted ; anguish of all sizes ;
Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in ;
Bibles laid open ; millions of surprises ;
Blessings beforehand ; ties of gratefulness ;
The sound of glory ringing in our ears ;
Without, our shame ; within, our consciences ;
Angels and grace ; eternal hopes and fears !
Yet all these fences, and their whole array,
One cunning bosom sin blows quite away.”—HERBERT.

PART VIII.



Preaching.

I.

CHRISTIAN preaching can arise only from a Christian mind and heart. This is the great want in the preaching of the present day: there is no spirit in it. It is the result of a kind of intellectual pumping; there is no gushing from the spring. Our Saviour, speaking to the woman of the happiness which his religion would bring into the bosoms of those who cordially embraced it, elegantly and expressively represents it by a well of water in the breast "springing up into everlasting life." Where this is in a minister it will spring *out*, as well as spring *up*: and it will be felt to be living water, from the pleasure and refreshment which it conveys, almost even to minds hitherto unaccustomed to such communications.

What Horace says is quite in point:

Non satis est PULCHRA esse poemata, DULCIA sunt
 Et, quocumque volunt animum auditoris agunt.
 Ut ridentibus arrident, ita flentibus adsunt
 Humani vultus. Si vis me flere, dolendum est
 Primum ipsi tibi; tunc tua me infortunia lædent.*

The PULCHRA is all that a man, who does not himself feel, can attain to: the DULCIA is the offspring of an impressed and interested heart. But, if such effects were to be produced by the mere feeling exhibition of human distress, what may not be looked for from divine truths,—interesting to the hearer, no less than to the speaker; and interesting beyond all that can be conceived, to every natural sentiment of man,—when done justice to in the same way that Horace here demands for the drama?

A witty poet has well said :

The specious sermons of a worldly man
 Are little more than flashes in the pan :
 The mere haranguing upon what men call
 Morality, is powder without ball :
 But he, who preaches with a Christian grace,
 Fires at our vices, and the shot takes place.

* 'Tis not enough to weave the graceful line,
 With grace thy poems sweetness should combine :—
 A melting tenderness must mellow art,
 If thou would'st move at will the hearer's heart.

But it may be asked, what is the mean between cold morality and wild enthusiasm? To this it is answered, that the mean between all extremes is Christianity, as given in the New Testament. An attention to the exhibition of Christ's religion, as taught by himself; as exemplified in the acts of the apostles, and as expanded and ramified in the epistles, particularly of St. Paul,—is the best and only preservative against coldness, against fanaticism, and against superstition. But this simple, direct view of Christianity, has very seldom been taken. Most men, in all ages, have sat down to the Gospel with a set of prejudices which, like so many inquisitors, have laid the Christian religion on a bed like that of Procrustes; and, as it suited them, either mutilated it by violence, or extended it by force.

We agree, however, with Mrs. Chapone, in her ingenious essay on the subject, that coldness is a far more dangerous extreme than over-much heat. The one may consist with real goodness: nay, may be the consequence of real goodness, commixing with a perturbed imagination, or an ill-informed judgment. But coldness can be resolved only into an absolute want of feeling. Enthusiasm is excess, but coldness is want of vitality. The enthusiast, in a moral view, is insane;

To every mood the human face can turn,
Smile with the smiling, with the mourner mourn;
Would'st thou my tears? First bid thy sorrows flow,
My heart then bleeds with sympathetic woe.

which implies the possibility of recovery, and perhaps a partial or occasional recurrence of reason. The cold person is like the idiot, whose reason never shows itself, and whose convalescence is desperate.

But, let it ever be remembered, that he who has really found the mean between the two extremes, will and must be reckoned enthusiastic by those who are in the extreme of coldness. You can easily conceive that, when any one stands on a middle point, between two others, who are, with respect to him, strictly equidistant, he must, from the inevitable laws of perspective, appear to both, not to lie in the middle, but comparatively near the opposite party. He therefore

Auream quisquis mediocritatem
Diligit,

must make up his mind to be censured on both sides : by the enthusiast, as cold ; by those who are really cold, as an enthusiast.

This, however, is a digression. We return to the New Testament view of Christianity, and the representation given of it there differs from that given in most pulpits, in very many and very important instances. We shall notice two instances particularly :

I. Christianity is represented, in most pulpits, rather as a scheme of external conduct, than as an inward principle of moral happiness and moral rectitude.

In modern sermons, you get a great many admonitions and directions, as to *right conduct*: but what David asked for so earnestly is seldom touched upon,—“Create in me a CLEAN HEART, O God! and renew a RIGHT SPIRIT within me.” Now, the New Testament dwells on this as its main object: “make the tree good,” says Christ, “and its fruit will also be good. Except ye be converted, and become as little children, you can, in no wise, enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

These expressions evidently imply that, in order to be Christians, persons must undergo a moral change; that Christianity is designed to make them something which they are not by nature; and that the alteration produced in the mind, the affections, and the conduct, by a right and full acquiescence in the Gospel, is so radical, so striking, and so efficacious, as to warrant the strongest imagery, in order to do it justice, that language can furnish.

“Except a man,” says our Lord, “be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” “If any man,” says St. Paul, “be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.” “If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above: for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.” And, to quote

but one passage more from St. Paul,—“They that are Christ’s, have crucified the flesh with the affections and desires.”

Now what do these expressions imply? After every fair allowance for figure and metaphor, do they not convey a far deeper and more mysterious view of Christianity, than is commonly adverted to? Some divines endeavor to explain these and similar passages, as if they referred rather to a relative and extrinsic, than to a real and internal change; as if they meant merely proselytism from heathenism to Christianity, and initiation into outward church privileges. But this miserable mode of interpretation is flatly inconsistent with the whole tenor of the New Testament. It is not HEATHENISM, but MORAL EVIL, which is here pointed out, as the grand source of human misery: and the aptitude of the GOSPEL, to overcome and extirpate this moral evil, is what is dwelt upon as its great and leading excellence. These, therefore, and all similar passages, must be understood in a moral sense: and when so understood, how deep is their import! To suppose that there is not a strict appositiveness in these figurative expressions, would be to accuse the apostles, and Christ himself, of bombastic amplification: but, if they have been thus applied, because no other ones were adequate to do justice to the subject, we say, again, what a view do they give of Christianity!

It may be said that enthusiasts have abused these

expressions. True: but what then? What gift of God has not been abused? And the richest gifts most grossly? Meanwhile, the Scriptures remain unadulterated; and, abused as they may have been by perverse misinterpretation, on the one side or on the other, we have no right to go to any other standard.

With these passages of Scripture, then, and many similar ones, nay, with the whole tenor of the New Testament in view, we hesitate not to say that Christian preaching consists, first, in representing man to be, by nature, a weak, ignorant, sinful, and of course miserable being; as such, to be liable to God's displeasure; and to be absolutely incapable of enjoying any real happiness, either here or hereafter. The passages of Scripture which prove this, are innumerable: we shall give but a few. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. The carnal mind is enmity against God. The carnal man knoweth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them; because they are spiritually discerned. They that are in the flesh cannot please God. Having the understanding darkened; being alienated from the life of God."

Nor are we to suppose that these texts speak only of the grossly wicked. St. Paul repeatedly explains such statements to belong to all mankind, until they are brought to repentance, and are inwardly as well as outwardly changed by divine grace. And in fact our own

experience confirms the truth of this. For, if we look around us, whom do we see either truly good, or truly happy? Some there are unquestionably; though, too generally, in a very low and imperfect degree. But how rarely do we discover, what St. Paul calls, “the FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT, . . . love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” Yet, surely, the possession of these tempers is just as essential to Christianity now as it was in the days of St. Paul: now, as well as then, it is an immutable truth that, “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

To show, then, strongly and feelingly, the misery, not only of sinful actions, but of that carnal, worldly, indelicate, unfeeling state of mind, in which most men are content to live; and to point out the absolute necessity of a change from that state into an humble, watchful, spiritual, devout, filial frame of mind, is, unquestionably, the very foundation of all Christian preaching; as it is, in truth, the keystone of Christianity.

The very word repentance points out the reality and depth of this change—a transformation of mind. And our Lord’s words to St. Paul clearly explain wherein that change consists: “To open their eyes; to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God:” that is, to enlighten them with a divine and saving knowledge of what is true

and good ; to fill their hearts with the love of it ; and to furnish them with the power to perform it. The blessings consequent upon this change immediately follow : “ That they may receive forgiveness of sins ; and an inheritance among them that are sanctified ; through faith, that is in ME.”

Christianity, then, in this view, is really what St. Paul calls it, . . THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION. When thus pursued, that is, when a deep sense of inward depravity and weakness excites a man to seek divine knowledge, and divine grace, in order to the enlightening of his mind, and the renewing of his heart, . . . when this view produces conscientious watchfulness, excites to fervent habitual devotion, and presents to the mind, in a new light, God’s inestimable love in the redemption of the world by His SON, . . then, by degrees, sometimes more rapidly, sometimes more slowly, the true Christian character begins to form itself in the mind. Then the great things spoken of Christianity, in the New Testament, begin to be understood, because they begin to be felt. The vanity of earthly things becomes more and more apparent : that divine faith which gives victory over the world, begins to operate : religious duty, once burthensome, becomes delightful : self-government becomes natural and easy : reverential love to God, and gratitude to the Redeemer, producing humility, meekness, active, unbounded benevolence, grow into habitual principles : private prayer

is cultivated, not merely as a duty, but as the most delightful exercise of the mind : cheerfulness reigns within, and diffuses its sweet influence over the whole conversation and conduct : all the innocent natural enjoyments of life (scarcely, perhaps, tasted before, from the natural relish of the mind being blunted by artificial pleasures) become inexhaustible sources of comfort : and the close of life is contemplated as the end of all pain, and the commencement of perfect, everlasting felicity.

This, then, we conceive, is a faint sketch of that state of mind to which the Christian preacher should labor to bring himself and his hearers. This we take to be “true religion ;” “our Saviour’s well of water, springing up into everlasting life ;” St. Paul’s “new creature,” and “spiritual mind ;” and St. John’s fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

These points, therefore, are taken to be the great features of Christian preaching :

I. The danger and misery of an unrenewed, unregenerated state ; whether it be of the more gross, or of the more decent kind.

II. The absolute necessity of an inward change : a moral transformation of mind and spirit.

III. The important and happy effects which take place, when this change is really produced.

I know not any place in which the view of practical Christianity which has been given, is either so clearly

or so compendiously set forth as in that collect of the afternoon service, "O God, from whom all holy desires," &c. It seems as if that prayer were peculiarly fitted for those who feel in themselves the marks of sincere repentance; but whose change, from the influence of the carnal mind to that of the spiritual mind, is not yet completed. It therefore begins with a Scriptural enumeration of the component parts and effects of true repentance; and an ascription of these to the God of grace, as their only source. "Holy desires," answer to St. Paul's "opening of the eyes;" "good counsels," or resolutions, to the "turning from darkness unto light;" and "just works," are the certain consequences of being brought "from the power of Satan unto God." St. Paul was directed to inculcate this, in order to the receiving of "remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified:" and, on exactly the same principle, this admirable collect directs the penitent to ask from God "that peace which the world cannot give." This is what the true penitent looks for; and it embraces, in the largest sense of the word, both the blessings which the apostle speaks of: "remission of sins," that is, well-grounded peace in the conscience; and "an inheritance among them that are sanctified," that is the blessed peace of a pure, holy, benevolent, pious mind; living by faith above the world, and having its conversation (its *citizenship*) in heaven. Both these are contained in the nature of that "peace of God

which passeth all understanding ;” and its effects are beautifully expounded, in the words which immediately follow : “ that both our hearts may be set to obey thy commandments, and also that, by thee, we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may pass our time in rest and quietness, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour.” This determinateness of heart, : . as, by a second nature, more fixed even than the first, . . to keep God’s commandments, and the consequent freedom from all fear, external and internal, being the perfection of Christianity. And see how scriptural all this is : “ The *work* of righteousness shall be peace : and the *effect* of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.” Zacharias, in his hymn, states it to be the very matter and substance of the mercy promised to the fathers, . . “ That we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.” And St. John expressly says, “ Perfect love casteth out fear ; for he that feareth, is not made perfect in love.” Now, only compare this collect with the statement above, and say whether they do not suggest the identical same view of Christianity.

It must be observed, however, that the change we speak of, must, from variety of circumstances, vary in conspicuousness. Some have pleased God from their youth ; have never lost a sense of duty : in these, of course, there cannot in the nature of things be that deep

compunction which penitents feel, who have been rescued from a lower depth. Nay, some even are gently and gradually reclaimed from a course of vice and folly ; so that their final safety may be the result of an almost imperceptible advance through many years. But the change itself, from the dominion of the carnal mind to that of the spiritual mind, must be wrought : because, “ If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but, if ye, through the spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” To insist, therefore, on the change itself : to lead men into their own bosoms to inquire what most prevails with them ; this world or the next : to ascertain what spirit they are of ; of the self-denying spirit of Christ, or the self-indulging spirit of the world : to ask whether, like David, they love God’s law ; or whether their obedience is the result of servile fear : to examine whether they have any sense of “ God’s inestimable love, in the redemption of the world by his Son ; ” or whether they are conscious that they would have been just as happy if such a thing never had taken place : to seek, finally, whether they feel the need of the aid and consolations of God’s Spirit ; and, therefore, find prayer as necessary to their mental comfort as food is to their bodily strength : . . . to urge such inquiries, we take to be CHRISTIAN PREACHING ;—to insist on circumstances ; . . . such as, a moment of conversion, known and remembered ; certain depths of distress ; strongly marked, instantaneous consolations,

. . as if these had been *necessary*, we conceive to be
ENTHUSIASM.

Having now said enough of the first error in preaching: that of making Christianity to consist rather in outward performances than in an inward change,—

II. The second error, we apprehend, is, that preachers exhort men to do, without impressing on them a sense of their natural inability, to do any thing that is right; and their consequent need of Divine grace: first, to create them anew unto good works; and then to strengthen them by daily and hourly assistance.

Our blessed Saviour begins his sermon on the mount, by pronouncing, not certain actions, but certain dispositions happy, to show that right dispositions are the only source whence right actions can proceed. And, in order to the attainment of those right tempers, he directs to earnest prayer for God's holy Spirit; with this encouragement, . . "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Father, who is in heaven, give his holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

But the second error is, in fact, the natural consequence of the first. For where an inward spiritual principle is not insisted on as primarily and essentially requisite in religion, there the whole system must be vague, extrinsic, and superficial.

It is remarkable, but it will be found a fact, that the meditations of Marcus Antoninus contain a much

strieter plan of moral self-government than is set forth by most modern Christian preachers. He seems to have looked much more to the state of his mind and temper, than the generality of pulpit instruction insists upon. And, certainly, Cicero's beautiful picture of a virtuous man (*De Legib. lib. i. ad fin*) comes nearer the New Testament, than the view taken by the far greater number of existing Christian moralists. But can this be just and right? If Christianity amounts to no more than a heathen moralist could, by philosophic discipline, attain, we may well ask, to what purpose did the Son of God take our nature upon him? Why did he suffer death upon the cross?

To some, no doubt, this whole scheme would appear enthusiastic, and be set down as rank Methodism. If so, we can only say it is such Methodism as was taught by the great divines of our church, from the Reformation until the latter end of the seventeenth century. Then some of the most popular divines took up a mode of moral preaching, which they seemed to have learned from Episcopius, and the other Dutch Remonstrants; and to which Tillotson's over-disgust at his own Puritanic education very much contributed. This mode became more and more general, until at length little other was to met with.

Many will think the view here given of religion, as implying an inward change, and an habitual devotion, as too strict, and somewhat fanatical.

As to the first objection, I would desire any candid person seriously to consider our Lord's view of religion in the parable of the sower, and ask his own reason whether, in the distinction made between the thorny-ground and the good-ground hearers, there is not an awful indication of the strictness of His religion. I would recommend to attention, also, the truths suggested in the parable of the man who came into the marriage feast, not having on a wedding garment. But, above all, the parable of the ten virgins: this is the most awful of all our Lord's discourses. Where, it may be asked, lay the difference between those individuals? It was not external: they were all called virgins; they all appeared in equal readiness; they all had their lamps burning; which must mean, that they all maintained an equally promising character, as far as human eyes could go. The difference, then, is *internal*: the foolish had oil in their lamps for the present, but no supply, no reservoir, in their vessels. Can this mean anything short of what has been stated above, that Christianity implies (in the words of Scougal) "a real participation of the divine nature; the very image of Christ drawn upon the soul; or, as it is in the apostle's phrase, Christ formed within us"?

As to the second objection, that this view is somewhat fanatical, . . I would answer, that the divines deservedly esteemed among the wisest and most rational in our church entertain precisely these views: and one of

the most eminent among them, to whom I may safely appeal, the judicious Hooker. Refer to the tracts at the end of his Ecclesiastical Polity, and read the thirteenth and fourteenth sections of the first of the two sermons on part of St. Jude's epistle; compare what he there says with these statements, and see whether he does not, in using language bolder, and more unqualified, go beyond my view of the question.

II.

No doubt, preaching, in the proper sense of the word, is more effective than reading; and therefore I would not prohibit it, but leave a liberty to the clergyman who feels himself able to accomplish it. But as things now are, I am quite sure I prefer going to church to a pastor who reads his discourse; for I never yet heard more than one preacher without book who did not forget his argument in three minutes' time, and fall into vague and unprofitable declamation, and, generally, very coarse declamation too. These preachers never progress; they eddy round and round. Sterility of mind follows their ministry.

Every attempt in a sermon to cause emotion, except as the consequence of an impression made on the reason, or the understanding, or the will, I hold to be fanatical and sectarian.

III.

I would warn you, and that with all solemnity, against rendering your discourses so local as to be pointed and levelled at particular persons in your congregation. This species of address may produce in the party for whom it is intended confusion perhaps, and shame, but not with their proper fruits of penitence and humility. Instead of which, these sensations will be accompanied with bitter resentment against the preacher, and a kind of obstinate and determined opposition to his reproof. He will impute your officiousness to personal enmity, to party spirit, to the pleasure of triumphing over an adversary without interruption or reply, to insult assuming the form of advice, or to any motive rather than a conscientious solicitude for the amendment and salvation of your flock. And as the person himself seldom profits by admonitions conveyed in this way, so are they equally useless, or perhaps noxious, to the rest of the assembly; for the moment the congregation discover to whom the chastisement is directed, from that moment they cease to apply any part of it to themselves. They are not edified, they are not affected: on the contrary, they are diverted, by descriptions of which they see the design, and by invectives of which they think they comprehend the aim. Some who would feel strongly the impropriety of gross

and evident personalities, may yet hope to hit their mark by covert and oblique allusions. Now of this scheme, even when conducted with the greatest skill, it may be observed that the allusions must either be perceived, or not. If they be not perceived, they fail of the effect intended by them ; if they be, they are open to the objections which lie against more explicit and undissembled attacks. Whenever we are conscious, in the composition of our discourses, of a view to particular characters in our congregation or parish, we ought to take for granted that our view will be understood. Those applications, therefore, which, if they were direct, would produce more bad emotions than good ones, it is better to discard entirely from our sermons : that is to say, it is better to lay aside the design altogether, than to attempt to disguise it by a management which is generally detected, and which, if not seen through, defeats its purpose by its obscurity. The crimes then of individuals let us reserve for opportunities of private and seasonable expostulation. Happy is the clergyman who has the faculty of communicating advice and remonstrance with persuasion and effect, and the virtue to seize and improve every proper occasion of doing it ; but in the pulpit, let private characters be no otherwise adverted to, than as they fall in with the delineations of sins and duties which our discourses must necessarily contain, and which, whilst they avoid personalities, can never be too close or circumstantial. For the same rea-

son that personal allusions are reprehensible, I should condemn any, even the remotest, reference to party or political transactions and disputes. These are at all times unfit subjects, not only of discussion in the pulpit, but of hints and surmises. The Christian preacher has no other province than that of religion and morality. He is seldom led out of his way by honorable motives, and, I think, never with a beneficial effect.

IV.

The dry details of meagre morality which are pronounced from some pulpits, have no more aptitude to mend hearts than the most fraudulent quack medicines have to avert mortality: but, beyond doubt, what is spoken in other, has; for the fruits are apparent in the sobriety, the regularity, the conscientious conduct, personal and relative, of thousands and tens of thousands. Now, in my mind, this influential piety is of inestimable worth. It comes from the only true source—revealed truth, “received in the love of it:” and its results are answerable; being exactly what St. James so beautifully describes it, “the wisdom from above:” “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits; without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” It certainly does not operate mechanically, and therefore not necessarily. It

is, of course, to be both checked and warped by the free agency of the subject ; therefore, fair beginnings often produce no lasting fruit ; and undue mixtures lessen the effect too frequently, even where they do not wholly overcome the good principle : all which is foretold in Scripture.

I differ from many divines in no point more than in this ; that they think the influences of the Spirit of God wholly imperceptible : I, on the contrary, am certain that no true comfort in religion can be enjoyed until those influences are rationally perceived in such efforts as our own power never could have produced.

What is that aid of which so much is said in Scripture, if it be marked with no moral effect but what reason could accomplish for itself ? In such a view, with what hyperboles is the New Testament filled ! and to what a cold and meagre skeleton does Christianity shrink ! This is not the doctrine of the Church of England. It tells us (17th Article) that godly persons “feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things.” And this, in my mind, is the very soul of our Christian religion ; this real and felt influence, this transmutative and regenerative energy, is the very thing which places Christianity above all philosophy, and all mere law, even though given from heaven ;

and this it is which makes it to weak and corrupted man what St. Paul calls it, "the power of God unto salvation."

Sure I am it is the neglect of this "inward and spiritual grace" which keeps Christianity so low amongst us, and so limited in the world. They who feel nothing of this, naturally neglect it in their preaching; and, whenever it is neglected, that takes place which Milton describes in "Lycidas:"

"And when they list, their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scraunel pipes of wretched straw;
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed."

Serious persons go off elsewhere; infidels are confirmed in infidelity; and the thoughtless dream on, till the sleep of life is ended.

V.

Tell me, ye high-flown perfectionists, ye boasters of the light within you, could the highest perfection of your inward light ever show to you the history of past ages, the state of the world at present, the knowledge of arts and tongues, without books or teachers? How then can you understand the providence of God, or the age, the purpose, the fulfilment of prophecy, or distinguish such as have been fulfilled from those to the ful-

filment of which we are to look forward? How can you judge concerning the authenticity and uncorruptedness of the Gospels, and the other sacred Scriptures? And how, without this knowledge, can you support the truth of Christianity? How can you either have, or give, a reason for the faith which you profess? This light within that loves darkness, and would exclude those excellent gifts of God to mankind, knowledge and understanding, what is it but a sullen self-sufficiency within you, engendering contempt of superiors, pride and a spirit of division, and inducing you to reject for yourselves, and to undervalue in others, the helps without, which the grace of God has provided and appointed for his Church—nay, to make them grounds or pretexts of your dislike or suspicion of Christ's ministers, who have fruitfully availed themselves of the helps afforded them?

VI.

God forbid that every man who can take unto himself boldness to speak an hour together in a church upon a text should be admitted for a preacher, though he mean never so well. I know there is a great latitude in gifts, and a great variety in auditors and congregations; but yet so as there is below which you ought not to descend. For you must rather leave the ark to shake as it shall please God, than put unworthy

hands to hold it up. When we are in God's temple, we are warned rather to "put our hands upon our mouth, than to offer the sacrifice of fools." And surely it may be justly thought, that amongst many causes of atheism, as schisms and controversies, profane scoffings in holy matters, and the like, it is not the least, that divers do adventure to handle the Word of God, who are unfit and unworthy. Herein I would have no man mistake me, as if I did extol curious and affected preaching; which is as much on the other side to be disliked, and breedeth atheism and scandal as well as the other: for who would not be offended at one that cometh into the pulpit as if he came upon the stage to play parts or prizes?

VII.

As one of the faults imputed to Episcopal clergymen was unskilfulness in preaching, he (Archbishop Leighton) was solicitous to remove from his own diocese all color for this allegation. This he knew could never be effected, until the pulpits were filled with holy men. "It is vain," he would say, "for any one to speak of divine things without something of divine affections. An ungodly clergyman must feel uneasy while preaching godliness, and will hardly preach it persuasively. He has not been able to prevail on himself to be holy, and no marvel if he fail of prevailing on others. In

truth, he is in great danger of becoming hardened against religion, by the frequent inculcation of it, if it fail of melting him."

He was careful to put his clergy in remembrance that no substantial good could be expected from their ministrations, unless they were themselves remarkable for sanctity of heart and life; men of prayer, of study and meditation; of great contempt of this present world and inflamed affections toward heaven; whose pure and peaceable demeanor, full of mercy and good fruits, should stamp them for the sons of God and servants of the meek and lowly Jesus. Moreover, he considered a singular modesty and gravity, even in externals, to be highly becoming in ministers, whose profession it was to give themselves wholly to the care of immortal souls.

In a synod he was publicly reprimanded for not "preaching up the times." "Who," he asked, "does preach up the times?" It was answered that all the brethren did it. Then he rejoined, "If all of you preach up the times, you may surely allow one poor brother to preach up Jesus Christ and eternity."

VIII. ·

The leading defect in Christian preaching is want of a devotional habit. The Church of Rome made much of this habit. The contests accompanying and

following the Reformation, with something of an indiscriminate enmity against some of the good of that church as well as the evil, combined to repress this spirit in the Protestant writings ; whereas the mind of Christ seems, in fact, to be the grand end of Christianity in its operation upon man.

A minister must cultivate a tender spirit. If he does this so as to carry a savor and unction into his work, he will have more weight than other men. This is the result of a devotional habit. To affect feeling is nauseous and soon detected ; but to feel is the readiest way to the hearts of others.

There is a manifest want of a spiritual influence on the ministry of the present day. I am afraid there is too much of a low, managing, contriving, manœuvring temper of mind among us. We are laying ourselves out more than is expedient, to meet one man's taste and another man's prejudices. The ministry is a grand and holy affair, and it should find in us a simple habit of spirit, and a holy but humble indifference to all consequences.

Some Christian ministers fail in their effect on their hearers, by not entering into the state of human nature. They do not consider how low the patient is reduced ; that he is to be treated more as a child ; that he is to have milk administered to him instead of strong meat. They set themselves to plant principles and prove points, when they should labor to interest the heart.

But, after all, men will carry their natural character into their ministry. If a man has a dry, logical, scholastic turn of mind, we shall rarely find him an interesting preacher. One in a thousand may meet him, but not more.

Uction.

UNCTION is neither learning nor eloquence, but a cordial communication by the preacher of that vitalized truth on which he lives himself. Wherever there is such preaching, it will engage attention and influence hearts. There is in the great laws of the moral world a kind of secret understanding, like the affinities in chemistry, between rightly promulgated religious truth and the deepest feelings of the human mind; and where the one is duly exhibited, the other will respond. "Did not our hearts burn within us?" said the two travellers to Emmaus; but to this, devout feeling is indispensable in the speaker. This *onction*, as the French not unfitly term it, is rarely to be found; but where it is, the consequence is, that the *religious animal*, man, goes instinctively, as it were, where his religious susceptibilities are most powerfully elicited. And, when once religious sentiment is really excited, he will return to that preacher whose discourses have had that effect on

him, just as naturally as the sagacious quadruped to his accustomed field.

Preaching directed on this basis will speak to the heart ; there will be an energy, a pathos, an interiority, which will penetrate the inner man, and touch the master springs of human nature ; there will be a correspondence to innate feeling, which will interest the lowest and most illiterate ; and there will be a truth of philosophy, with which the highest minds, once inspired with a love of good, will delight to be occupied. It is, in fact, the philosophy of our Redeemer, vital and simple as it proceeded from himself, that Christian ministers are called upon to embody and enjoin in all their discourses.

What is a Sermon ?

THERE are two ways of regarding a sermon ; either as a human composition or a Divine message. If we look upon it entirely as the first, and require our clergymen to finish it with their utmost care and learning, for our better delight, whether of ear or intellect, we shall necessarily be led to expect much formality and stateliness in its delivery, and to think all is not well if the pulpit has not a golden fringe round it, and if the sermon be not fairly written in a black book, to be

smoothed upon a cushion in a majestic manner before beginning. All this we shall duly come to expect ; but we shall, at the same time, consider the treatise thus prepared as something to which it is our duty to listen without restlessness for half an hour or three quarters, but which, when that duty has been decorously performed, we may dismiss from our minds, in happy confidence of having another whenever it shall be necessary.

But if once we begin to regard the preacher, whatever his faults, as a man sent with a message to us which is a matter of life and death, whether we hear or refuse ; if we look upon him as set in charge over many spirits in danger of ruin, and having allowed him but an hour or two in the seven days to speak to them ; if we make some endeavor to conceive how precious these hours ought to be to him, a small vantage on the side of God after his flock have been exposed for six days together to the full weight of the world's temptations, and he has been forced to watch the thorn and the thistle springing in their hearts, and to see what wheat had been scattered there snatched from the wayside by this wild bird and the other, and at last, when, breathless and weary with the week's labor, they give him this interval of imperfect and languid hearing, he has but thirty minutes to get at the separate hearts of a thousand men, to convince them of their weaknesses, to shame them from all their sins, to warn them of all

their dangers, to try by this way and that to stir the hard fastening of those doors where the Master himself has stood and knocked, and yet none has opened, and to call at the openings of those dark streets where wisdom herself has stretched forth her hands, and no man regarded ; thirty minutes to raise the dead in—let us but once understand and feel all this, and we shall look with changed eyes upon that frippery of gay furniture about the place from which the message of judgment must be delivered, which either breathes upon the bones that they may live, or, if ineffectual, remains recorded in condemnation, perhaps against the utterer and listener alike, but assuredly against one of them. We shall not so easily bear with the silk and gold upon the seat of judgment, nor with the ornament of oratory in the mouth of the messenger ; we shall wish that his words may be simple, even when they are sweetest, and the place where he speaks like a marble rock in the desert, about which the people have gathered in their thirst.

Preaching and Hearing.

I.

THE stream of custom and our profession bring us to the preaching of the Word, and we sit our hour under

the sound ; but how few consider and prize it as the great ordinance of God for the salvation of souls, the beginner and the sustainer of the divine life of grace within us ! And certainly, until we have these thoughts of it, and seek to feel it thus ourselves, although we hear it most frequently, and let slip no occasion, yea, hear it with attention, and some present delight, yet still we miss the right use of it, and turn it from its true end, while we take it not as that ingrafted word which is able to save our souls. (Jas. i. 21.)

Thus ought they who preach to speak the word ; to endeavor their utmost to accommodate it to this end, that sinners may be converted, begotten again, and believers nourished and strengthened in their spiritual life ; to regard no lower end, but aim steadily at that mark. Their hearts and tongues ought to be set on fire with holy zeal for God and love to souls, kindled by the Holy Ghost, that came down on the Apostles in the shape of fiery tongues.

And those that hear should remember this as the end of their hearing, that they may receive spiritual life and strength by the Word. For though it seems a poor, despicable business, that a frail sinful man like yourselves should speak a few words in your hearing, yet, look upon it as the way wherein God communicates happiness to those who believe, and works that believing unto happiness, alters the whole frame of the soul, and makes a new creation as it begets again to

the inheritance of glory,—consider it thus, which is its true notion ; and then what can be so precious !

The hearing and reading of the Word are alike defective when pursued without increase of knowledge, and when pursued chiefly for increase of knowledge. To seek no more than a present delight, that vanishes with the sound of the words that die in the air, is not to desire the Word as meat, but as music, as God tells the Prophet Ezekiel of his people, Ezek. xxxiii. 32 : *And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument ; for they hear thy words and do them not.* To desire the word for the increase of knowledge, although this is necessary and commendable, and, being rightly qualified, is a part of spiritual creation, yet, take it as going no farther, it is not the true end of the Word. Nor is the venting of that knowledge in speech and frequent discourse of the Word and the divine truths that are in it ; which, where it is governed with Christian prudence, is not to be despised, but commended ; yet certainly the highest knowledge and the most frequent and skilful speaking of the Word severed from the growth here mentioned, misses the true end of the Word.

II.

It is a strange folly in multitudes of us to set ourselves no mark, to propound no end in the hearing of

the gospel. The merchant sails not merely that he may sail, but for traffic; and traffics that he may be rich. The husbandman plows not merely to keep himself busy, with no further end, but plows that he may sow, and sows that he may reap with advantage. And shall we do the most excellent and fruitful work fruitlessly—hear, only to hear, and look no farther? This is indeed a great vanity and a great misery, to lose that labor, and gain nothing by it, which duly used would be, of all others, most advantageous and gainful; and yet all meetings are full of this.

III.

“And lo, thou art unto them as a lovely song of one that has a very pleasant voice.” (Ezek. xxxiii. 32.) The music of the voice; the gracefulness of delivery; a flow of words; the surprise of novelty and notion; the beauty of sentences; and the sparkling of wit and fancy, or an appearance of learning. These are, I doubt, too often the things that draw together and charm an auditory: and so all are pleased, but none converted or edified; for who blushes, or trembles, or grows pale at these sermons? Who goes away from them wounded, or struck through, serious and pensive, full of pious fears and devout desires?

IV.

Oh, how heaven-like it is to sit among brethren at the feet of a minister who speaks under the influence of love, and is heard under the same influence! For all abiding and spiritual knowledge, infused into a grateful and affectionate fellow Christian, is as the child of the mind that infuses it. The delight which he gives he receives; and in that bright and liberal hour the gladdened preacher can scarce gather the ripe produce of to-day without discovering and looking forward to the green fruits and embryos, the heritage and reversionary wealth of the days to come; till he bursts forth in prayer and thanksgiving. The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers few. O gracious Lord of the harvest, send forth laborers into thy harvest! There is no difference between Jew and Greek. Thou, Lord over all, art rich to all that call upon thee. But how shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? And oh! how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth glad tidings of good things, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto the captive soul, Thy God reigneth! God manifested in the flesh hath redeemed me!

Sermons and Prayer.

SERMONS serve for these two purposes : to teach their duty to those who are ignorant of it, and to put those in mind of their duty who are neglectful of it ; showing the first sort how to perform it ; and persuading the latter effectually to put it in practice. In both which things, sermons contribute to salvation no otherwise than he who shows a traveller his right way and advises him to keep in it contributes to his reaching his journey's end. For if the traveller shall rest satisfied in the bare advice and instruction which he has received, and proceed no farther, he is never likely to reach the place of his original destination ; since it is not to be supposed that he who directs him is to carry him thither upon his back. It is just the same case in hearing sermons. The minister's business is no more than to teach us how to be saved ; our own piety and virtue must carry us to heaven. This is the use of sermons, and a very great and necessary use it is ; and yet a man may be damned, notwithstanding all the good instructions that enter in at his ears, unless they make a right impression on his heart. But it cannot be imagined that the same thing will serve for all purposes. The ear is made for one use, and the heart for another ; the one is the conduit of instruction, the other the seat of wisdom. So the mouth is very useful in receiving

food for the body ; but it is the stomach that must digest and prepare it for strength and nourishment. Thus it sufficiently appears what the use of sermons is.

The use of prayer is now to be considered. And first it must be known that the affections of the soul have something that correspond and sympathize with them in the body, by which they usually discover themselves ; as grief in the soul appears by the weeping of the eyes, and joy displays itself in a gay and cheerful countenance. And so in our several duties to God, according as the soul is affected from the same causes, it will certainly make the same outward discoveries. If it be oppressed with trouble, or has a lively sense of its wants and imperfections, it will oblige the tongue to utter them ; seeking redress in humble petitions. If it abounds with gratitude, the lips will not be able to refrain their thanks, nor to withhold their praises and adorations when the soul is inflamed with love. Thus, prayer is the language of the soul, whereby it expresses its several conditions and affections to the Almighty God ; between whom and it, by this means, a constant correspondence is held. By prayer, the soul explains and unfolds itself to God, and, by the virtue of prayer, draws down continual benefits and blessings from heaven ; asking being made the condition of receiving. And it is a folly for any one to expect favors that he will not take the pains to ask for.

And thus the advantages of those different, but ne-

cessary, duties are discovered. Sermons hold the light for the direction of prayer: the former being the instruments of instruction; the latter, the instrument of salvation. Nay, it may be added, that were all people as wise and as virtuous as they ought to be, and could continue so, there would be no need at all of sermons; since there would be no occasion for teaching or persuading; the former relating only to the ignorant, and the latter to the obstinate and vicious. Insomuch that, as folly, weakness, and vice have alone made sermons necessary, so nothing but such a perfection in wisdom and virtue as the frailty of human nature will hardly admit of, can ever render them useless. But the obligation to prayer is that which nothing can ever cancel or discharge: for, the more perfect wisdom and virtue grow, the more vehement and incessant will they render prayer; which can never cease, so long as there remains any spark of the love of God in the soul, or any sense of his bounty and benefits. Could prayer have an end, the pleasure of the soul must end with it; since the smothering of strong affections causes as great an uneasiness in the mind as the venting of them gives relief, and consequently delight. Wherefore, so long as there is love in the soul, it will take pleasure in declaring that love; and, so long as there is gratitude, it will delight in expressing that gratitude; and, whilst it continues virtuous and happy, it must have these affections. Therefore prayer must be eternal as the soul itself.

Revivals of Religion.

AFTER religion revives in the church of God, and enemies appear, people that are engaged to defend its cause are commonly most exposed where they are least sensible of danger. While they are wholly intent upon the opposition that appears openly before them, to make head against that,—and do neglect carefully to look around them,—the Devil comes behind them and gives a fatal stab, unseen; and has opportunity to give a more home-stroke and wound the deeper, because he strikes at his leisure, and according to his pleasure, being obstructed by no guard or resistance.

And so it is likely ever to be in the church, wherever religion revives remarkably; till we have learned well to distinguish between saving affections and experiences and those manifold fair shows and glistening appearances by which they are counterfeited. By this means the Devil deceives great multitudes about the state of their souls; making them think they are something when they are nothing. By this means he many ways damps and wounds religion in the hearts of the saints; obscures and deforms it by corrupt mixtures; causes their religious affections wofully to degenerate; and sometimes, for a considerable time, to be like the manna which bred worms and stank: and dreadfully ensnares and confounds the minds of others of the

saints, and entangles them in a wilderness, out of which they can by no means extricate themselves. By this means, Satan brings in even the friends of religion, insensibly to themselves, to do the work of enemies, by destroying religion in a far more effectual manner than open enemies ever do, under the notion of advancing it.

The Liturgy.

I.

WE of all Protestants have in our Liturgy the purest and richest relic of the old state of things, and, consequently, the truest sample and earnest of the new. It combines, in a manner (for which, except in the sacred volume itself, I know no parallel), the sublimity of all St. Chrysostom, with the solidity of the better parts of St. Augustine. It is like the sacred fire which the author of the second Book of Maccabees supposes to have been preserved during the captivity; with this difference between his fable and our reality, that with us the primitive flame is not hidden in a pit, but has been kept up, as by the unseen hand of omnipotence, upon the altar of our church. May we not expect, with design that, in due time, other national churches may have their altars lighted from ours? Extempora-

neous worship has prevailed, because the appetite for devotion has needed the stimulancy of human passion and social excitement. When better habits of piety are formed, spiritual food will be estimated by its nutritiousness, not by its poignancy. What Burnet tells us Leighton chiefly aimed at, in his acceptance of a Scotch bishopric, was “to try how he could raise men to a truer and higher sense of piety, and bring the worship out of the extempore methods into more order; which he thought of more importance than a form of government”—an attempt, doubtless, to which the angelic man was propelled by his own high-raised taste, and in which he failed no less surely from the want of the same taste in his countrymen. This, no doubt, will at length be realized as to the substance of the pious wish, with respect to the church in general. And when that “truer and higher sense of piety” shall require a worship suited to it, what model will be so naturally looked to as that which, though drawn from the most ancient sources, is as far from being obsolete to-day as it was on the day of its first establishment? that which presents to the view the most exquisite junction of the soberest rationality with the sublimest piety that has ever been yet exhibited in this lower world?

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What will make the Church of England live is that it has adopted and embodied, with singularly happy

selection, the sublime piety of the primitive church. This is done in the Liturgy. In its Articles it draws its materials, as I conceive, from later times, and speaks that theological language which commenced with St. Augustine. This had its use ; has served important purposes in the Christian church ; and perhaps was adopted by our Reformers on strong grounds of expediency. But, abstractedly, the Liturgy is much to be preferred to the Articles : the latter being very much human ; the former little short of divine. The one partakes much of that knowledge which will “vanish away ;” the other of that “love that never faileth.”

In view of these impressive circumstances, can we estimate the Liturgy as merely human ? Does God speak to us only by his Word ? Does he not convey his mind by his works also ? And those works, if clear, are surely authoritative. “He,” says Bacon “who bringeth in evil things, resisteth the will of God, revealed in his word ; and he who bringeth in new things, resisteth the will of God in things themselves. Therefore, take counsel of the providence of God, as well as of his word.” If this luminous sentiment has any truth in it, to what case could it be applied with the same justice as to the preserving to the Catholic church generally, and the far more wonderful preserving to our church in particular, that form of sound words contained in our Liturgy ?

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It is to be wished that those whose concern it is, would make a due estimate of the providential standard afforded in our inestimable Liturgy. Without it a Whitfield and a Wesley never could have risen ; and its due appreciation can alone secure us, in a reasonable view, from the possible consequences of sectarian vacillation. Alas ! it is poorly understood, and therefore, cannot, in the mean time, accomplish all its just purposes. But, if it be only permitted to remain, without disturbing its structure, or unlocking its sacred arch, it will remain at once the *decus* and *tutamen* of professional and of vital Christianity, for, soberly considered, it is the model of inward and effective religion which our services continually place before us, as the work of man. “What the gifts of the Spirit may in every age of the church have done,” says the liberal Doddridge, “by operations of this kind,” that is, by raising minds above their human level, “we know not.” It can be shown by the strongest marks, that, if ever this was the case, it was in the first drawing up of our prayers by St. Gregory, and in the no less wonderful remodification of them at our own Reformation.

II.

The Liturgy is not the work of one man ; of one society ; or of one age : it is like the British Constitution, a precious result of accumulated and corrective

wisdom. Its materials were gradually formed and safely deposited among the records of various churches, eastern and western, more and less ancient, more and less pure ; and when time was ripe for its formation, its compilers were led, I verily believe, by a wisdom not their own, to proceed on the principle of rejecting whatever was peculiar to any sect or party, to any age or nation ; and retaining that sacred depositum which had the common sanction of all. So that, in addition to the touchstone of Sacred Scripture, we have the “semper et ubique” of the Catholic church to satisfy us that this, our national commentary, is framed according to the analogy of faith.

The Lord's Supper.

I.

IN considering this ordinance, happily, we have two rallying points,—what is said in Scripture, and what is contained in the formularies of the English Church ; but both require expansion ; and as yet, I know not any one who has expanded either to purpose.

My own idea of the Lord's Supper is made up from these two sources, considering the one as primary, the other subordinate : I ought to add, regarding the one

as strictly divine, the formularies as not merely human : for having been preserved, and in different instances very curiously modified, in ways far above common contingency, I consider the formularies as singularly marked by the hand of Divine Providence, and as, therefore, affording a more than human (a subordinatedly Divine) guidance on the points to which they apply.

Thus aided then, in my view of the Lord's Supper, I regard it as the peculiar act of Christian worship ; the import of which concerns us, either as immortal, or as morally diseased intelligences. Our blessed Saviour, as God manifest in the flesh, represents himself as a fountain of influence, alike powerful to reanimate the human spirit as supposed in a state of normal death, and to nourish it when reanimated with all that tends to our lasting well-being. The sacred text of the New Testament,—eminently the four Gospels, and supereminently the Gospel of St. John, places this great object before us descriptively, so as to afford inexhaustible matter of reflection, contemplation, and devotion. But the very nature of influence requires not explanation or exhibition only, but actual communication. Food does not sustain, water does not quench, wine does not cheer, by being looked at or thought about, but by being actually received, and united with our system. The fact, then, of a source of Divine influence required a medium of communication ; and that medium is, by Divine appointment (and, consequently, by

infallible Divine operation), the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

To understand, then, the great end of the Lord's Supper, we must rightly apprehend the great object of the Gospel. This is not merely to teach us (the Old Testament had done this), but to animate, dispose, and strengthen us. Christianity supposes duty known, and even an imperfect desire for internal as well as for external rectitude. The Gospel meets this desire. Godhead presents itself in human nature, in order to draw to itself, through human sympathy as well as through Divine energy, our predominant affection. It places itself in that light, and shows itself in that form, most exquisitely fitted to penetrate all the depth, to concentrate all the capacity, and to engage all the susceptibility of the human mind and heart. Every point in our Saviour's life is thus powerful, and thus attractive. But his death is the central point in which everything that belongs to Him as man and as God, as humiliated and as glorified, is brought into convergiment. As a subject of thought, therefore, it is the fountain head of Divine philosophy; for it realized all the excellence which the brightest heathen sages had ever fancied. But, as an act of God incarnate, intended for endless use, it is infinitely more: it is an object whose transcendently rational force is made divinely omnipotent by the energy of Godhead, ever in readiness to carry the natural aptitude supernaturally into the mind and

heart. Of this supernatural influence, then, I consider the Lord's Supper the divinely constructed conduit: it is the connecting link between earth and heaven, the point where our Redeemer is vitally accessible, "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." When he said, "This is my body," and "This is my blood," he made this sacrament the simple elements, to be forever the vehicles, to all capable receivers, of all that is vitalizing, sanative, purificatory, consolatory, confirmative, in himself,—in his life or in his death, his exquisite humanity or his adorable divinity.

He, therefore, who comes to the Lord's Supper, has two points to consider,—his own spiritual wants, (whether diseases, weaknesses, or even something like spiritual death,) and our Redeemer's correspondent fulness. St. John could not more strongly describe the noblest privilege of himself and his fellow Apostles, than by saying, "and of his fulness have all we received." In what other way could the beautiful idea of the Platonist be so realized, "*Felix qui potuit boni fontem bibere lucidum?*" The Lord's Supper, therefore, perpetuates the apostolic privilege; and, I would with reverence add, substantiates the lovely Platonic vision. Do I desire real virtue, true goodness, genuine mental liberty, safety from contamination while here, pure admission to happiness hereafter? This is the question for the communicant to ask: for if he feels this holy desire, the Lord's Supper is the presence-

chamber where the Redeemer waits to gratify his wish ; to do, by his mystical touch, all that for souls which he once did for bodies ; yea, to do infinitely more ; the blessing which he supernaturally communicates in the Eucharist, to those who are capable of receiving it, being as far as it is, in the nature of things, communicable, the virtuality of Himself.

II.

The Lord's Supper is a holy rite, wonderfully adapted to raise excellent passions : here Christ is, as it were, "set forth crucified amongst us ;" we see his body broken and his blood poured forth ; here with a devout joy we receive and embrace him by faith and love in those symbols of his body and blood, and pledges of his love. The soul must be very ill prepared, it must have very imperfect notions of sin and damnation, the cross of Christ, grace and salvation, which is not sensible of a crowd of holy passions springing up in it at this sacrament.

Among all the means of grace, there is none that does so much sustain and nourish the soul of man as the holy eucharist. How many wise and impartial reflections does the preparation for it occasion ? What unfeigned humility, and what a profound awe of the Divine majesty, does a previous self-examination beget

in us? What a tender sense of the Divine love does the contemplation of the whole mystery enkindle? What firmness and resolution do we derive from fresh vows and repeated engagements; and these offered up with so much solemnity? And finally, how much is the habit of holiness improved by that spiritual pleasure, which the sensible assurances of grace and salvation work in us, by that awe and holy fear which the whole action leaves behind on our minds, and the zeal, vigilance, and circumspection it obliges us to for the time following? Not to mention here how the participation of this holy sacrament obliges us to a solemn exercise of repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus, of brotherly love and charity, and the hope of immortality and glory. Here, in a word, we prepare to meet God, as we would do in death and judgment; here we make an open profession of our holy faith, renounce the world and flesh, all our sinful or vain desires; devote ourselves to the service of Jesus, and learn to expect happiness from nothing else but the merits and imitation of His cross. So profound is the wisdom of this institution, that it evidently speaks God the author of it, and proclaims the too common neglect of it an inexcusable sin and folly.

III.

There is no question that he who believes in the divinity of our Saviour, and acknowledges his satisfaction for the sins of mankind, who truly repents of his sins, and resolves sincerely to forsake them, and who, in obedience to our Saviour's commands, communicates in the sacrament of his body and blood, but worthily receives it.

His believing that there is no change or alteration in the elements of bread and wine after consecration, does not alter the case. If he believes, as it is most natural to believe, that our Saviour, when he said, "This is my body, this is my blood," did, by the same Almighty word of power, which said, "Let there be light, and there was light," ordain and decree that all those blessings and benefits which he had purchased and procured for mankind, by his passion, death, and intercession, should, as long as the world continues, attend upon the sacred action, and be annexed to it; and that every individual person who, in a just and thankful remembrance of what his Saviour had done and suffered for him, should, in obedience to his command, receive the sacrament of his body and blood,—every such person should be made a partaker of all the blessings and benefits of His passion and death; obtaining a perfect remission of his sins, and eternal salvation through

His merits and intercession, if he persevered in obedience to Him : so that, according to the definition of our church, the bread and wine in this sacrament would be, most certainly, the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.

This view puts an end to all the disputes about transubstantiation and consubstantiation, and would fully answer all the desirable ends and purposes of this sacrament ; and, indeed, it really and truly seems to be the plain and natural meaning of the words of our blessed Saviour.

We are not to imagine that this last injunction of the highest endearment between our Saviour and his disciples, was only a barren rite or ceremony to entitle them to the same blessing of acceptance, common to all other acts of obedience and devotion ; but that these words of our Saviour, “ This is my body, this is my blood,” without his having any thought of changing the elements of bread and wine, do, by a plain interpretation, assure us that the action of receiving should effectually be attended with a full participation of the benefits purchased, and of the atonement made for us, by His body crucified, and by His blood shed upon the cross for the redemption of mankind.

It is infinite mercy and almighty power that has, to the end of the world, annexed those blessings to this holy sacrament ; and it is by faith and obedience only that we can be rendered capable of receiving them ;

nor does it depend, as the Romanists absurdly imagine, upon the intention of the priest whether the communicants shall receive these blessings or not; neither is there any occasion or reason for the repeated sacrifices of the mass. The foregoing view can be confuted by nothing but by plain and positive words of Scripture, which are nowhere to be found. As for inferences to be drawn from them, those which favor and support this view are the most just, easy, and natural, and, freeing the mind from doubts and difficulties, render this great mystery as intelligible as it possible to be; sufficiently affording to every devout communicant a rational satisfaction and comfort. When we consider how much is given, and how much is forgiven us, it cannot fail to kindle in our souls the strongest flame of love they are capable of entertaining for each of the divine persons in the blessed Trinity, to whom all duty, praise, and love must be ever due.

The best preparation for the performance of this duty is a constant endeavor of becoming a sincere Christian, without which all devotion is vain and ineffectual, and with which every religious duty will most certainly be accompanied with success and acceptance. But since, through the exceeding weakness and imperfection of our nature, even the best of men are too often apt to be remiss in their duties, and to slacken their endeavors of pleasing God, it is most reasonable, that when we are about to commemorate the exceeding

love of our blessed Saviour, in his death and sufferings for us, we should diligently apply ourselves to repair our remissness, and strive to raise our minds and affections to the highest sense of duty and gratitude ; which is all the return we are capable of making for these inestimable blessings we are about to receive.

The celebration of this sacrament is most fitly and solemnly performed in the Church of England, and in a manner perfectly agreeable to its first institution. The elements are set apart and consecrated for that holy purpose, and prayer is made for the fulfilling of that promise which was virtually made by the words of our blessed Saviour ; who is petitioned, that his body which was given for us, and his blood which was shed for us, may preserve our bodies and souls unto everlasting life, and that we should ever thankfully remember his infinite mercy toward us. All divine promises for mercy and blessings, though fixed and positive, yet the stated condition of our obtaining them is by duty and prayer ; it being vain to imagine that the greatest of benefits should be bestowed upon any who do not earnestly covet and desire them.

FRAGMENTS.

"Truths, of all others the most awful and interesting, are too often considered as so true, that they lose all the power of truth, and lie bed-ridden in the dormitory of the soul, side by side with the most despised and exploded errors.
. . . There is one way of giving freshness and importance to the most commonplace maxims—that of reflecting on them in direct reference to our own state and conduct, to our own past and future being."—COLERIDGE.

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FRAGMENTS.

I. CHRISTIANITY is, essentially, the discipleship of the heart, met by a presence and communication as divinely suited to an inward connexion, as the visible presence and external communications of our blessed Lord were proportioned to the outward discipleship of his followers during his ministry on earth.

ALEXANDER KNOX.

II. Unless Christianity be viewed and felt in a high and comprehensive way, how large a portion of our intellectual and moral nature does it leave without object and action.

COLERIDGE.

III. Good sense, so called, is but a poor dim shadow of what Christians call faith. Good nature is only a faint distant resemblance of Christian charity. And good manners, if of the most finished kind that nature

assisted by art can attain to, is but a dead picture of that holiness of conversation which is the image of God visibly expressed. All these put together by the art of God is Christianity.

WESLEY.

IV. It is a true saying, that they who begin by loving Christianity better than truth, will proceed by loving their own sect or church better than Christianity, and end in loving themselves better than all.

COLERIDGE.

V. Religion is, in an eminent degree, the science of the heart, and he who does not receive it into his heart, studies it to very little purpose. Every Christian ought therefore to study with the heart as well as with the head ; letting light and heat increase with an equal progression, and mutually assist each other.

SCHIMMELPENNINCK.

VI. It is evident that true religion, or holiness, lies very much in the affections, because the Scriptures place sin very much in hardness of heart ; and it is equally evident that without holy affection there is no religion. No light in the understanding is good which does not produce holy affection in the heart ; no habit of mind is good which has no such exercise ; and no external fruit is good which does not proceed from this principle.

JONATHAN EDWARDS.

VII. By religion, I mean a steady choice, and affectionate adherence to God, as the paramount object of our hearts, and the supreme sum and centre of our happiness.

ALEXANDER KNOX.

VIII. Religion refines our moral sentiments, disengages the heart from every vain desire, renders it tranquil under misfortune, humble in the presence of God, and steady in the society of men.

JOHNSON.

IX. True religion is always a powerful principle; and this power, in the first place, is exercised in the heart, the principal and original seat of it. Hence, true religion is called the power of godliness, in opposition to the external appearance, or the mere form of it.

JONATHAN EDWARDS.

X. Man is not at all settled or confirmed in religion, until his religion is the self same thing with the reason of his mind; that when he thinks he speaks reason, he speaks religion; or when he speaks religiously, he speaks reasonably, and his religion and reason are mingled together; they pass into one principle; they are no more two, but one: just as the light in the air makes one illuminated sphere, so reason and religion, in the subject, are one principle.

WHICHCOTE.

XI. Some place their religion in books, some in doctrines, some in images, and some in the pomp and splendor of external worship: these "honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." But there are some who, with illuminated understandings, discern the glory which man has lost, and with pure affections pant for its recovery. These hear and speak with reluctance of the cares and pleasures of the present life, and even lament the necessity of administering to the wants of animal nature.

KEMPIS.

XII. The religion which God requires, and will accept, does not consist in weak and lifeless inclinations, raised but a little above a state of indifference, but as His word insists upon it, that we should be in earnest, "fervent in spirit," having our hearts vigorously engaged in religion.

JONATHAN EDWARDS.

XIII. True religion begins in prayer, and in prayer more than anything else it is exercised.

ALEXANDER KNOX.

XIV. If men only thought of their religion as they think of their estates, they would feel the need and value of guaranteed continuity. They could not be rationally and cordially at ease in their own religious professions, without wishing them entailed on posterity.

ALEXANDER KNOX.

XV. Religious instruction should be communicated in a way to interest the feelings by lively images : there seems to be no good reason why religion alone must be dry and uninteresting, while every other thing is to be made amusing. Why should not the most entertaining powers of the human mind be supremely consecrated to that subject which is most worthy of their full exercise.

HANNAH MORE.

XVI. In conversing with those who have an aversion to religion, we should begin by showing them that it is by no means contrary to reason ; in the next place that it is worthy of veneration, to inspire them with respect for it ; and after this, we should describe it as lovely, to make them wish it to be true ; and then we may demonstrate it to them by irrefragable proofs, that it is true ; we may show them its antiquity and holiness, its majesty and sublimity ; and finally show them it is amiable, in that it holds out to us the true good.

PASCAL.

XVII. The serious, too generally, disfigure religion by their beclouded views of it ; and the formally orthodox take occasion from that openly and violently to oppose it.

ALEXANDER KNOX.

XVIII. Theology is a science ; religion a spirit. The mere theologian may prosecute his task in a logi-

cal and exact manner, but the system he erects may be as dry and lifeless as a statue or a skeleton. L. Q.

XIX. Theology is a Divine chemistry, which can be understood only by being studied in the laboratory of the heart. ALEXANDER KNOX.

XX. The truth that makes free from the galling yoke of sin possesses a *vitalizing* power, and when really operative in the human heart exhibits an external evidence in manner, bearing and appearance, that must reach the heart of the beholder, and bear unmistakable evidence to the eternal principle from which it emanates. It is neither more nor less than the life of God in the soul of man, the meek and lowly heart of our Saviour imparted by the Divine Spirit.

SCHIMMELLPENNINGK.

XXI. If the secret of all regenerate hearts could be laid open, we should doubtless view with a mixture of astonishment and gratitude the quantity of benefit which has been, and which is effected in the world by the familiar converse, and even by the silent looks, of truly good men. BISHOP JEBB.

XXII. I am fully satisfied that there is a peculiar presence of God in his public ordinances; that the devotion of good men does mutually inflame and kindle

one another ; that there is an holy awe and reverence seizes the mind of good men when they draw near to God in public worship ; and finally, that if the offices of our liturgy do not affect our hearts, it is because they are very much indisposed, and very poorly qualified for the true and spiritual worship of God. LUCAS.

XXIII. Spiritual conferences are highly serviceable to spiritual improvement, especially when persons of one heart and one mind associate together in the fear and love of God. KEMPIS.

XXIV. The heavenward instinct of the heart is weighed down by native animality, and bound down by contracted pravity ; but, when Divine mercy enfranchises it, and Divine grace gives it wings, the region of peace into which it is brought by the guidance of the Paraclete, is felt unutterably to be its own natural rest ; that for which it was designed by every character of its inward frame, and that for which it blindly panted in all its wanderings.

ALEXANDER KNOX.

XXV. God is especially present in the hearts of his people by his Holy Spirit : and indeed the hearts of holy men are temples in the truth of things, and, in type and shadow, they are heaven itself. For God reigns in the hearts of his servants : there is his kingdom. JEREMY TAYLOR.

XXVI. When the progress to perfection is placed only in external observances, our religion, having no divine life, will quickly perish with the things on which it subsists ; the axe must be laid to the root of the tree, that being separated and freed from the restless desires of nature and self, we may possess our souls in the peace of God. KEMPIS.

XXVII. In your retirement, make frequent colloquies, or short discoursings, between God and thy own soul. Every return of the heart in these intercourses is a going to Him, an appearing in His presence, and a representing Him present to thy spirit and to thy necessity. This was long since called by a spiritual person “a building to God a chapel in our heart.” It reconciles Martha’s employment with Mary’s devotion, charity and religion, the necessities of our calling and the employments of devotion. For thus in the midst of the works of your trade, you may retire into your chapel, your heart ; and converse with God by frequent addresses and returns. JEREMY TAYLOR.

XXVIII. We ought at all times so to prepare our spirits, and so regulate our actions, as if we were shortly to be admitted into “the joy of our Lord.” If that blessed event is still deferred, let us humbly acknowledge that we are not yet sufficiently prepared for that great “glory which shall be revealed in us,” in God’s appointed time : and may a contrite sense of such an

improper state quicken us to more faithful vigilance and a more holy preparation. "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. Verily I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath."

KEMPIS.

XXIX. It is my conviction that, when it pleases God to give a call to any mind to rise into the higher regions of religion, a disposition to hover in mid air is one of the most dangerous that can take possession of the soul. In this case nothing is *little*: the thing most trivial in itself becomes momentarily pernicious, if it ties to earth that spirit which God requires to soar toward himself.

ALEXANDER KNOX.

XXX. The knowledge of external things will never console us for our ignorance of morality in the time of affliction: but the knowledge of morality will always console us under the ignorance of external things.

PASCAL.

XXXI. As there is a foolish wisdom, so there is a wise ignorance, in not prying into God's ark, not inquiring into things not revealed. I would fain know all that I need, and all that I may: I leave God's secrets to himself. It is happy for me that God makes me of his court, though not of his council.

BISHOP HALL.

XXXII. It is far better to think of our spiritual and everlasting salvation than of anything else. In this solicitude there can be no delusion. We thus are preparing for all possible events. If even the advent of our Lord were at hand, we could not in any way be so well prepared for his visible appearing, as by our habitual desire and solicitation for his spiritual advent into our hearts and minds. ALEXANDER KNOX.

XXXIII. A mind accustomed to draw comfort from doctrines is as much averted from high spiritual pursuits, as they who number their beads before a crucifix, too generally, may be supposed to be spirituality itself. But the truth is, that so deceitful is the human heart, and so natively averse to spiritual self-denial, that so long as man can lay any kind of flattering unction to his soul, he will avoid the severity of selling all for the pearl. ALEXANDER KNOX.

XXXIV. God hath given every man work enough to do, that there shall be no room for idleness ; and yet hath so ordered the world that there shall be space for devotion. He that hath the fewest businesses of the world is called upon to spend more time in the dressing of his soul ; and he that hath the most affairs may so order them that they shall be a service of God ; whilst at certain periods they are blessed with prayers and ac-

tions of religion, and all day long are hallowed by a holy intention.

JEREMY TAYLOR.

XXXV. Our life ought to be very different on these two suppositions: one, that we may abide here forever; the other, that it is certain we cannot remain here long, and uncertain whether we shall remain even an hour. The latter supposition is our case.

PASCAL.

XXXVI. It is immortality that makes life a desirable blessing; without this it would be but an unprofitable and burthensome trifle, preserved with anxiety and quitted with terror.

CHARLES HOW.

XXXVII. It is an awful thing to feel all that we possess continually wasting away, and at the same time to set our heart upon it, without inquiring after something more solid and durable.

PASCAL.

XXXVIII. Is it not a fearful thing to spend our days in vanity, and then lie down in sorrow and darkness forever; to disregard the life of our soul, while we may and should be provident for it, and then when it is going out, cry *Quo nunc abibis?* Whither art thou going, O my soul?

LEIGHTON.

XXXIX. There is one picture which a man should

be drawing all the days of his life : the picture of God upon his soul : and though the resemblance must needs be extremely faint and imperfect, yet, by a constant application and meditation upon the beauties of the original, he cannot fail to make an admirable piece.

CHARLES HOW.

XL. There is a great difference between quiet and security of conscience. The former should only be derived from a sincere search of truth ; but nothing can give the latter but truth itself.

PASCAL.

XLI. Conscience is a clock, which in one man strikes aloud and gives warning ; in another, the hand points silently to the figure, but strikes not. Meantime, hours pass away, and death hastens, and after death comes judgment.

JEREMY TAYLOR.

XLII. It were worth a man's while to consider whether his present temper of mind be such as he would be willing to possess as long as he lives. And if, upon reflection, he finds his soul overspread with malice, pride, envy, avarice, injustice, or any other vice, let him consider whether that be the state he desires it should be in when it leaves his body. If it be, let him acknowledge himself an atheist ; if it be not, let him own himself a fool, and endeavor to grow wiser as soon as he can.

CHARLES HOW.

XLIII. There are but three descriptions of men ; those who serve God having found Him ; those who, not having yet found Him, are employed in seeking after Him ; and lastly, those who live without either having found Him, or seeking after Him. The first are rational and happy ; the third are irrational and foolish ; the second are unhappy, but yet are rational.

PASCAL.

XLIV. How wretchedly disposed is the heart of man toward God ! In prosperity, it is apt to be full of neglect ; in adversity, of repining ; and as for love and obedience, they may crowd in, when the two other think fit to make room for them.

CHARLES HOW.

XLV. It is good for man to suffer the adversity of this earthly life ; for it brings him back to the sacred retirement of the heart, where only he finds that the heart is an exile from his native home, and ought not to place his trust in any worldly enjoyment.

KEMPIS.

XLVI. It is an evidence of true wisdom not to be precipitate in our actions, nor inflexible in our opinions ; and it is a part of the same wisdom not to give hasty credit to every word that is spoken, nor immediately to communicate to others what we have heard,

or even what we believe. In cases of perplexity and doubt, consult a prudent and religious man ; and choose rather to be guided by the counsel of one better than thyself, than to follow the suggestions of thy own blind will.

A holy life, however, makes a man wise, according to the Divine wisdom, and wonderfully enlarges his experience. The more humble his spirit is, and the more subject and resigned to God, the more wise will he become in the conduct of outward life, and the more undisturbed in the possession of himself. KEMPIS.

XLVII. In the midst of the works of thy calling, often retire to God in short prayers and ejaculations, which make up the want of those larger portions of time which thou mayest desire for devotion, and in which thou thinkest other persons have advantage of thee ; for so thou reconcilest the outward work and thy inward calling, the church and the commonwealth, the employment of the body and the interest of thy soul. Thy time is as truly sanctified by a trade, and devout though shorter prayers, as by the longer offices of those who are free from labor and useful business.

JEREMY TAYLOR.

XLVIII. Never suffer the invaluable moments of thy life to steal by unimproved, and leave thee in idleness and vacancy ; but be always either reading, or

writing, or praying, or meditating, or employed in some useful labor for the common good. KEMPIS.

XLIX. The reason why sin is sin, is merely because it is contrary to the will of God. If, therefore, the essence of sin consists in having a will contradictory to the known will of God, it seems clear that when he discovers his will to us by events, we sin if we do not conform ourselves to it. PASCAL.

L. Let no one be deceived as if the contagions of the soul were less than those of the body. They are yet greater ; they convey more direful diseases ; they sink deeper, and creep on more unsuspectedly.

COLERIDGE.

LI. The power of sin ineradicably fixed in the soul, is, in truth, the worm that never dieth ; and full grown enmity to God is, in the highest sense, the fire that never shall be quenched. To suppose there were anything worse in hell than enmity to God, would be to suppose there were something better in heaven than the love of God. But all the laws of nature require that the supreme good and the supreme evil should correspond to each other ; and that, therefore, as the enjoyment of the supreme good is the heaven of heaven, so malignant aversion to that good must be the hell of hell.

ALEXANDER KNOX.

LII. Be not too slow in the breaking of a sinful custom ; a quick, courageous resolution is better than a gradual deliberation : in such a combat he is the bravest soldier that lays about him, without fear or wit. Wit pleads ; fear disheartens ; he that would kill Hydra, had better strike off one neck than five heads : fell the tree, and the branches are soon cut off.

QUARLES.

LIII. The moment a man gives way to inordinate desire, disquietude and torment take possession of his heart. The proud and the covetous are never at rest ; but the humble and poor in spirit possess their souls in the plenitude of peace.

KEMPIS.

LIV. Two laws are more adequate to the regulation of the whole Christian community than all political institutions together ; namely, the love of God, and that of our neighbor.

PASCAL.

LV. A deep sorrow for sin, arising from a genuine love of God, and a heartfelt grief for having offended him, are indispensably necessary to a truly evangelical repentance.

PORT ROYAL.

LVI. The understanding naturally believes, and the will naturally loves ; so that if they be not directed to true objects, they will necessarily fix upon false ones.

The understanding has a method of its own : which is, by principles and demonstrations. The heart has a method altogether different. We do not prove ourselves deserving of love by a methodical detail of the causes of love ; indeed this would be ridiculous.

Jesus Christ and St. Paul have oftener used this method of the heart, which is more that of charity than that of the understanding : because their principal design was not so much to inform as to inflame.

PASCAL.

LVII. It is necessary to be wise, in order to love wisdom ; to be good, that we love mercy ; and to be charitable, that we love bounty ; for, if these things be wanting in us, how can we love God, and adore him as we ought to do, for those lovely attributes ? On the contrary, it is as necessary to be temperate, that we may hate intemperance ; to be just, that we may hate injustice ; to be humble, that we may hate pride ; otherwise, how can we hate vice, which is so odious to God ?

CHARLES HOW.

LVIII. Faith is as necessary to the soul as the sun is to the world : were it not for these bright prolific lights, both the one and the other must remain dark and fruitless.

CHARLES HOW.

LIX. Faith is the blessed tree which produces the

noble and divine fruits of wisdom, virtue, and true felicity. But it is of so fine and delicate a nature, that it will not grow and thrive in the cold and barren soil of man's heart, without his incessant care and industry.

CHARLES HOW.

LX. Faith, if it be true, living, and justifying, cannot be separated from a good life; it works miracles, makes a drunkard become sober, a lascivious person become chaste, a covetous man become liberal; "it works righteousness," and makes us diligently to do, and cheerfully to suffer, whatsoever God hath placed in our way to heaven.

JEREMY TAYLOR.

LXI. Zeal is not a direct duty, is nowhere commanded for itself, and is nothing but a forwardness and circumstance of another duty, and therefore is then only acceptable when it advances the love of God and our neighbors, whose circumstance it is. That zeal is only safe, only acceptable, which increaseth charity directly; and because love to our neighbor and obedience to God are the two great portions of charity, we must never account our zeal to be good but as it advances both these, if it be in a matter that relates to both; or severally, if it relates severally.

JEREMY TAYLOR.

LXII. The only way, both to peace and truth, is true humility: which will teach us to think meanly of

ourselves ; to be diffident of our own apprehensions and judgments ; to ascribe much to the reverend antiquity, greater sanctity, deeper insight, of our blessed predecessors. This only will keep us in the beaten road, without all extravagant deviations into untrodden bypaths.

BISHOP HALL.

LXIII. If thou desire the love of God and man, be humble : for the proud heart, as it loves none but itself, so it is beloved of none but itself. The voice of humility is God's music ; and the silence of humility is God's rhetoric. Humility enforces, where neither virtue, nor strength can prevail, nor reason.

QUARLES.

LXIV. Let our love be firm, constant, and inseparable ; not coming and returning like the tide, but descending like a never-failing river, ever running into the ocean of Divine excellency, passing on in the channels of duty and a constant obedience, and never ceasing to be what it is, till it comes to be what it desires to be ; still being a river till it be turned into sea and vastness, even the immensity of a blessed eternity.

JEREMY TAYLOR.

LXV. Luther used to say, and it was not one of his worst sayings, that prayer was, as it were, the leeches of his troubles. But, were this all, it would be a poor

thing. The dim dawn of prayer teaches us that its meridian light is itself the dawn of heaven.

ALEXANDER KNOX.

LXVI. Whether the conversation of holy men, the endearing kindness of faithful friends, the melody of music in psalms and hymns, the entertainment of ingenious books, nay, the instructions of the oracles of God ; whether any or all these advantages are present, what do they all avail, what joy can they dispense, when the Holy Spirit is withdrawn from the soul, and it is left to poverty and wretchedness of fallen self? In such state, no remedy remains but meek and humble prayer, and the total surrender of the will to the blessed will of God.

KEMPIS.

LXVII. The lives of men in general, and the lives of saints, have this in common, that all of them aspire after happiness ; they only differ with regard to the object in which they place it : and each of them account those their enemies who prevent them from attaining it.

PASCAL.

LXVIII. This may be laid down as a general maxim, that whosoever is not sincere to man, can never be sincere to God ; nor can he that is insincere to God be ever sincere to man : for without sincerity there is no virtue, either moral or divine.

CHARLES HOW.

LXIX. Hopes are often, I might say generally, disappointed in this delusive world ; but I believe fears are very frequently disappointed also ; and thus are we mercifully taught, through our own experience, not to take anxious thought for to-morrow.

ALEXANDER KNOX.

LXX. The great purpose of all afflictions, where God is really feared, is to oblige us to cleave more closely to Him, by allowing us no other source of consolation. We never value the grace of God so much as when we are obliged to have recourse to it for our support against what would be, otherwise, everwhelming.

ALEXANDER KNOX.

LXXI. He is to be called evil that is good only for his own sake. Regard not how full hands you bring to God, but how pure. Many cease from sin out of fear alone, not out of innocence or love of virtue ; and are not to be called innocent, but timorous.

JEREMY TAYLOR.

LXXII. That is an admirable expression in the first collect in the morning prayer, "Thy service is perfect freedom." And a noble freedom it is indeed, to have the soul released from the insupportable slavery of ignorance and vice, and set at liberty to range in the spacious and delicious plains of wisdom and virtue ; to

have it delivered from the harsh and turbulent tyranny of insulting passions, and established under the gentle and delightful government of right reason.

CHARLES HOW.

LXXIII. Prayer unaccompanied with a fervent love of God, is like a lamp unlighted ; the words of the one, without love, being as unprofitable as the oil and cotton of the other, without flame. CHARLES HOW.

LXXIV. Our prayers must be fervent, intense, earnest, and importunate, when we pray for things of high concernment and necessity. Our desires must be lasting, and our prayers frequent, assiduous, and continual ; not asking for a blessing once, and then leaving it, but daily renewing our suits, and exercising our hope, and faith, and patience, and long-suffering, and religion, and resignation, and self-denial, in all the degrees we shall be put to. This circumstance of duty our blessed Saviour taught, saying, that “men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” JEREMY TAYLOR.

LXXV. Holy fear proceeds from faith ; false fear arises from doubt :—the former leads to hope, because it arises from faith ; we hope in that God whom we believe :—the latter leads to despair ; for we fear a God in whom we have no faith. Persons of the one character dread to lose God ; and those of the other to find Him. PASCAL.

LXXVI. I wish for no consolation that robs me of compunction ; nor aim at any contemplation that will exalt me into pride : for everything that is high is not holy, nor every desire pure, nor everything that is sweet, good ; nor everything that is dear to man pleasing to God. But acceptable beyond measure is that grace by which I am made more humble, and more disposed to deny and renounce myself. KEMPIS.

LXXVII. Though a man give all his substance to feed the poor, it is nothing ; though he mortify the desires of the flesh and blood, it is little ; though he comprehend the vast extent of science, he is far behind. Though he hath the splendor of illustrious virtue, and the ardor of exalted devotion, still he will want much if he still wants this “one thing needful”—poverty of spirit. KEMPIS.

LXXVIII. The Christian will ever have before his eyes the danger of wealth more than that of poverty, and the fear of superfluity more than that of necessity.

LXXIX. In the same degree in which we relish and are in love with spiritual delights, the hidden manna, with the sweetness of devotion, with the joys of thanksgiving, with rejoicing in the Lord, with the comforts of hope, with the deliciousness of charity and alms-deeds, with the sweetness of a good conscience,

with the peace of meekness, and the felicities of a contented spirit; in the same degree we disrelish and loathe all earthly and sensual pleasures.

JEREMY TAYLOR.

LXXX. As anciently God fed his servant Elias, sometimes by an angel, sometimes by a woman, sometimes by ravens, so doth he make all persons, whether good, bad, or indifferent, supply his people with that instruction which is the aliment of virtue, and of souls; and makes them and their examples contribute to the verification of that passage of St. Paul, where he says, that *all things coöperate for good to them that love God*.

ROBERT BOYLE.

LXXXI. We sometimes correct ourselves more effectually by the sight of what is evil, than by the example of what is good. And it is highly useful to accustom ourselves to derive instruction from evil, because it is so common, whereas that which is good is more uncommon.

PASCAL.

LXXXII. Self-command is not to be had at once, nor, perhaps, at all, if we do not labor for it. But we can do this only by continued endeavors to practise it; and we can do so to purpose, in solitude only. Self-command must indeed be most essentially exerted in society: but it must have been got in private; in per-

petual efforts to live upon ourselves, and be, under God, our own bank from whence to draw comfort. Growth in this is growth in common sense, in usefulness, and in happiness.

ALEXANDER KNOX.

LXXXIII. The safety and blessedness of man's state in this life are not to be estimated by the number of his consolations, nor by his critical knowledge of Holy Scripture, nor his exaltation to dignity and power, but by his being grounded and established in humility, and filled with divine charity, and by seeking in all he doth the glory of God.

KEMPIS.

LXXXIV. Were all people as wise and as virtuous as they ought to be, and could continue so, there would be no need at all of sermons; since there would be no occasion for teaching or persuading; the former relating only to the ignorant, and the latter to the obstinate and vicious.

CHARLES HOW.

LXXXV. I do verily believe, that if parents did their duty as they ought, the Word publicly preached would not be the ordinary means of regeneration in the church; but only without the church, among infidels.

BAXTER.

LXXXVI. At the Judgment Day, simple obedience shall be more highly prized than subtlety, and

a pure conscience more than learned philosophy ; the contempt of riches shall be of more value than all the treasures of worldly men ; and thou shalt have greater comfort from having devoutly prayed every day, than from having fared deliciously ; and shalt more rejoice that thou hast kept silence long, than thou hadst talked much. Then works of holiness shall avail thee more than the multitude of fine words : and a life of self-denial shall give thee more satisfaction than all earthly delights could bestow.

KEMPIS.

LXXXVII. A person who had long practised many austerities without finding any comfort or change of heart, was once complaining to his Bishop. “Alas ! said he, “self-will and self-righteousness follow me everywhere ; only tell me when you think I shall learn to leave self. Will it be in discipline, in study, in prayer, or in good works ?” “I think,” replied the prelate, “that the place where you will lose self will be that where you find your Saviour.”

PORT ROYAL.

LXXXVIII. One pleading in behalf of uniting worldly acquaintance with religious profession, said, “Believers are called to be the salt of the earth.” “Yes,” said his Bishop, “and yet if salt be cast into the ocean from which it was originally drawn, it will melt away and vanish entirely.”

PORT ROYAL.

LXXXIX. Selden, towards the close of life, began to see the emptiness of mere human learning: and owned that, out of the numberless volumes which he had read and digested, nothing stuck so close to his heart, or gave him such solid satisfaction, as a single passage out of St. Paul's epistle to Titus, ii. 14.

XC. One mistake perpetually made by one of our unhappy parties in religion,—and with a pernicious tendency to Antinomianism,—is to confound sin with sins. To tell a modest girl, the watchful nurse of an aged parent, that she is full of sins against God, is monstrous, and as shocking to reason as it is unwarrantable by Scripture. But to tell her that she, and all men and women, are of a sinful nature, and that without Christ's redeeming love and God's grace she cannot be emancipated from its dominion, is true and proper.

COLERIDGE.

XCI. I must think that it requires advancement in heart-religion rightly to relish the Holy Scriptures. It is one of my strong ideas of progressive happiness to be progressively impressed with the glories of the Scripture. I feel it so that I endeavor daily to crave from God a deeper love of his word, sensible in that single prayer I am asking the compendium of Christian excellence.

ALEXANDER KNOX.

XCII. A man of confined education, but of good parts, by constant reading of the Bible, will naturally form a more winning and commanding rhetoric than those that are learned; the intermixture of tongues and of artificial phrases debasing their style.

HENRY MORE.

XCIII. Intense study of the Bible will keep any writer from being vulgar in point of style.

COLERIDGE.

XCIV. To be under Divine Providence without reserve, in its inmost circle of action, is the greatest blessing, next to Divine grace itself, that can be enjoyed in this lower world; and everything is to be endured rather than risk the loss of this sole pledge of safety. Doubtless, when a state cannot be endured, it may in reason be taken as a providential permission, if not call, to escape if one can. But the impossibility of bearing should be clearly made out, lest the sequel should prove the feeling erroneous.

ALEXANDER KNOX.

XCV. If I did not believe in the Providence of God, and the consequent guidance of all things progressively to a good and happy issue, I should think the living world as jarring and jumbled a chaos as that of the earth when it was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. But believing

as I do in these two great truths, I see even amid the darkness such gleams of light, "such dawning of beams and promises of day," as persuade, and even satisfy me, that vices and follies, however gross, however predominant, are never suffered to have their own uncontrolled sway, but are always over-ruled, some way or other, so as to subserve the purposes, at least ultimately, of supreme wisdom and goodness.

ALEXANDER KNOX.

XCVI. If we wish to ascertain a man's character, we inquire what he takes pleasure in ; and in proportion as we find that his pleasures are pure and exalted, we rely upon his integrity and steadiness. We know that all is secure, when delight is found in that which purifies and sublimates human nature.

ALEXANDER KNOX.

XCVII. Nothing so much fixes a man's character, and gives direction and tone to all his faculties, as the view he has of happiness ; this is every one's ultimate object ; and as this is high or low, pure or impure, earthly or heavenly, so unquestionably will be the whole texture of life, the whole turn of our mind, the whole form and color of the thoughts and conceptions.

ALEXANDER KNOX.

XCVIII. Let every one of every condition avoid

curiosity, and all inquiry into things that concern them not. For all business in things that concern us not, is an employing our time to no good of ours, and therefore not in order to a happy eternity. JEREMY TAYLOR.

XCIX. Certainly men in great fortunes are strangers to themselves; and while they are in the puzzle of business, they have no time to attend to their health, either of body or mind.

“Who, exposed to others’ eyes,
Into his own heart never pries,
Death’s to him a strange surprise.”—BACON.

C. Amongst great numbers of men accounted rich, but few are really so. He only is the rich man that lives upon what he has, owes nothing, and is contented. For there is no determinate sum of money, nor quantity of estate, that can denote a man rich; since no man is truly rich, that has not so much as perfectly satiates his desire of having more. For the desire of more is want, and want is poverty.

CHARLES HOW.

CI. Wouldst thou multiply thy riches? diminish them wisely: or wouldst thou make thy estate entire? divide it charitably: seeds that are scattered, increase; but hoarded up, they diminish. BACON.

CII. Let thy conversation with men be sober and sincere; let thy devotion to God be dutiful and decent; let the one be hearty, and not haughty; let the other be humble, and not homely; so live with men as if God saw thee; so pray to God as if men heard thee.

QUARLES.

CIII. Christ forbids both the actual and the habitual intemperance; not only the effect of it, but also the affection to it; for in both there is sin. He that drinks but little, if that little make him drunk, and if he know beforehand his own infirmity, is guilty of surfeiting. But he that drinks much, and is strong to bear it, and is not deprived of his reason violently, is guilty of the sin of drunkenness. It is a sin not to prevent such uncharitable effects upon the body and understanding; and therefore a man that loves not the drink is guilty of surfeiting if he does not watch to prevent the evil effect: and it is a sin, and the greater of the two, inordinately to love or use the drink, though the surfeiting or violence do not follow. Good, therefore, is the counsel of the son of Sirach, "Show not thy valiantness in wine; for wine hath destroyed many."

JEREMY TAYLOR.

CIV. The best way to bring a clever young man, who has become sceptical and unsettled, to reason, is to make him *feel* something in any way. Love, if sin-

cere and unworldly, will, in nine instances out of ten, bring him to a sense and assurance of something real and actual; and that sense alone will make him *think* to a sound purpose, instead of dreaming that he is thinking.

COLERIDGE.

CV. When once the French shall have caught the true spirit of Christianity, they will be the most powerful instruments of diffusing it that the world could furnish. They possess a faculty of description so vivid, so insinuating, so irresistively penetrative and magnetic, that when they apply themselves to express those feelings which belong to the new nature, and those results which arise from it, as they have expressed those which belong to the old, Christian piety will have a set of advocates till then unequalled.

ALEXANDER KNOX.

CVI. The faculty of thinking justly is a more desirable talent than that of eloquence in speaking; the one being in order to an advantage only in expectation, whereas the other is the assured mark of a mighty advantage already received; the one tends to the advancement of interest or reputation, the other to the increase of wisdom and virtue; the one may make a man more agreeable to the world, the other will infallibly render him most agreeable to himself, and, what is infinitely more valuable, most acceptable to God.

CHARLES HOW.

CVII. It is not happiness to be capable of being pleased with diversion ; because all this is external and foreign, and consequently dependent, and liable to be disturbed by a thousand accidents, which give rise to inevitable afflictions. We are so unhappy that we cannot take pleasure in anything, but on condition of being displeased if it do not succeed, which a thousand accidents may occasion ; and do every hour. He that has found out the secret of delighting himself in good, without being disturbed by the opposite evil, has hit the true point.

PASCAL.

CVIII. Let thy recreation be manly, moderate, seasonable, lawful ; if thy life be sedentary, more tending to the exercise of the body ; if active, more to the refreshing of the mind. The use of recreation is to strengthen thy labor, and sweeten thy rest.

QUARLES.

CIX. You may depend upon it, religion is, in its essence, the most gentlemanly thing in the world. It will alone gentlize if unmixed with cant ; and I know nothing else that will, alone.

COLERIDGE.

CX. Of those who formerly lived upon earth, and perhaps made the most conspicuous figure, how many are there whose names are perished with them ! How many of whom only the names are remaining ! Thus

are we likewise passing away ! And thus shall we shortly be forgotten ! Happy are we, if, while we are forgotten by men, we are remembered by God ! If our names are lost on earth, are at length found written in the Book of Life.

WESLEY.

CXI. There is no source of earthly enjoyment that I oftener or more fervently thank God for than that which is to be found in the genial companionship of good books. Many other joys perish in the fruition ; this is never a perished joy : such is the marvellous quality of it that not only the past lives in memory, but may be ever renewed with more than its first delight.

M. R.

CXII. "Thank God for books," said Sydney Smith ; and who that has known what it is to depend on them for companionship but will say from his heart, "Amen" ? In lone country houses, where friends are few ; in crowded city streets, amid greetings where no kindness is, thank God for books ! Dearest, best of friends—soothing, comforting, teaching, carrying us far away from the "briers of this working-day world ;" never importunate, never impatient, may we learn to use you as you use us !

CXIII. The best books are records of the writer's own experiences of what he himself has seen or known,

or, best of all, has done. The writing thus becomes naturally concrete, perspicuous, a mirror of the fact; and whether it be a book for the world and for ages, or for nations and generations, there is this common to them all, that they are genuine records of genuine things, and throw light on the subject. S. T.

CXIV. Books are faithful repositories, which may be awhile neglected or forgotten; but when they are opened again, will again impart their instruction: memory once interrupted is not to be recalled. Written learning is a fixed luminary, which, after the cloud that had hidden it has passed away, is again bright in its proper station. Tradition is but a meteor, which, if it once falls, cannot be rekindled. COLERIDGE.

CXV. Who kills a man, kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were in the eye. Many a man lives a burthen to the earth; but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life. MILTON.

CXVI. He that will throw away a good book because it is not curiously gilded, is more curious to please his eye than to inform his understanding.

JEREMY TAYLOR.

CXVII.

Who reads

Incessantly, and to his reading brings not
 A spirit and judgment equal or superior,
 Uncertain and unsettled still remains,
 Deep versed in books, and shallow in himself.

MILTON.

CXVIII. In reading authors, when you find

Bright passages, that strike your mind,
 And which, perhaps, you may have reason
 To think on at another season,
 Be not contented with the sight,
 But take them down in black and white :
 Such a respect is wisely shown,
 As makes another's sense one's own.

BYRON.

CXIX. During his last hours, Sir Walter Scott, having requested his son-in-law to read, and being asked what book, replied, "Need you ask? There is but one."

CXX. Robert Hall, on being asked if he had read a certain book, replied, "I never read a profane work, sir !"

CXXI. Reject all studies that are merely curious ; and read what will penetrate the heart with holy compunction, rather than exercise the brain with useless speculations.

KEMPIS.

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